

Testimony Concerning H.B. 5578

Environmental Committee

March 11, 2016

Ellen Wilson

Dear Co-Chair Kennedy, Co-Chair Albis, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

Please accept this as my testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 5578, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROUS HORN**. I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to express my support of this important Act.

I care very much about animals and am concerned about how, even though the majority of the population is currently opposed to the inhumane treatment of animals, our laws still allow the horrific treatment of animals when there is big money to be made. When members of special interest groups gain wealth at the expense of animals, the animals suffer but people lose too as we helplessly watch these species of animals we love moving closer to extinction.

In this case, elephants and rhinos are being slaughtered just so people can possess trinkets of ivory. It is almost unimaginable that elephants are sometimes still alive as their tusks are hacked off of their faces. Baby elephants are often left orphaned and are unable to survive on their own. If you feel your stomach turn as you imagine this picture, it is your gut telling you what we all know: **THIS IS WRONG!**

I have loved African animals—especially elephants, rhinos, and giraffes—ever since the first time I saw them in a zoo as a child. I also had the typical childhood experience of going to a circus. But times have changed and society has become more aware of what these captive animals endure. The suffering of these animals' is too high a price to pay in exchange for the "entertainment".

As a former independent school teacher, I took students on three overseas service trips to help animals that are facing extinction or are suffering. Each of the problems was the result of cruelty by humans and laws that protect those who benefit at the expense of these animals. My dream trip is to take students to volunteer at a sanctuary for orphaned elephants, many whose mothers have been slaughtered by poachers, and hope to do this in the future. It is a shame that this need even exists.

I'm sure you are aware that terrorist organizations often use wildlife trafficking to finance their criminal activities. There are many loopholes in our federal laws and regulations pertaining to the international and domestic ivory trade. As a Connecticut citizen, I know that our state has one of the higher rates of illegal sales of ivory. We must join our neighboring states of New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Vermont who have already passed or are in the process of passing tougher laws to prohibit the sale of ivory. I personally would like to see Connecticut take the lead on this issue and pass the strongest laws prohibiting the sale of ivory, including mandatory sentences for those in violation.

On Election Day, I consider how each candidate has voted on issues that concern the treatment of animals because for me, this is a measure of their morality. I **WILL NOT** vote for a candidate who protects corporate interests over the humane treatment of animals...and I never miss a vote.

I strongly encourage you to support H.B. 5578 and I thank you for your consideration.

Ellen Wilson, New Milford, CT

"To make money from cruelty is the lowest form of humanity." -- Author unknown