

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 vote, and this issue is important to me.

I support HB 5578 because:

* Unprecedented global poaching crisis: Wildlife trafficking is an escalating global crisis fueled in part by the U.S. ivory market - which is among the top few markets globally. Between 2010 and 2012, 100,000 elephants were killed for their ivory - an average of one every 15 minutes. All extant five rhino species are threatened with extinction, with merely 29,000 remaining worldwide.

* Horrific cruelty: Elephant and rhino poaching is a brutal and bloody practice - animals are sometimes chased with helicopters and shot down with military-grade weapons. Tusks and horns are harvested by cutting off the faces of the sometimes still-living animals. Babies are often killed for their tiny stubble of tusk or horn. Elephant babies, who do not have tusks, are left as orphans; unable to fend for themselves, they often die if not rescued by humans.

* National security issue: Extremist groups and terrorist organizations are often involved in wildlife trafficking, using it to finance their military operations. At \$8-10 billion per year, the illegal wildlife trade ranks as the fourth most lucrative criminal activity internationally, behind only narcotics, counterfeiting, and human trafficking.

* During the last decade, more than one thousand park rangers across the world have been killed by poachers while on duty.

* Intrastate loophole: Federal laws do not reach into intrastate (within a state) commerce, thus providing a major loophole for illegal ivory or ivory of unknown origins to be laundered into our state and sold to unsuspecting Connecticut residents.

* USFWS supports statewide bans: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service believes state bans are important, with Director Dan Ashe stating: "The ivory poaching and trafficking crisis is a complex problem that requires action on multiple levels to ensure that commercial trade doesn't contribute to the slaughter of elephants in the wild. As we work to make it harder for criminals to launder illegal ivory into international and interstate commercial trade, it's encouraging to see states taking actions within their own borders."

* Identification difficulties. The difficulty of distinguishing legally acquired ivory from ivory of recently poached elephants are exploited by unscrupulous dealers to launder illicit ivory into our marketplace. Criminals have been known to provide fraudulent documents to investigators, and also to age newly harvested ivory so that it appears old. Only experts, using special equipment, can sometimes tell the difference between old and new ivory.

* Federal laws and regulations pertaining to ivory trade are confusing and riddled with loopholes that are exploited by those involved in the international and domestic ivory trade. This also leads to consumer confusion about what is legal and what is not. The result is a flourishing, poorly regulated domestic ivory market in the United States.

* This bill would not criminalize possession or prohibit inheritance gifts-this bill takes aim the market for ivory (i.e., trade and sales).

* Connecticut must not become a haven for illicit ivory. Surrounding states have either already passed laws (NY, NJ) or are in the process (MA, VT). There have been several recent significant ivory and rhino horn seizures in the northeast.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,

Leslie Bhutani

100 Clapboard Ridge Rd

Greenwich, CT