



*Connecticut Chapter
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Environment Committee
Room 3200, Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 240-0440
envtestimony@cga.ct.gov

Re: **SUPPORT H.B. 5578** (ENV), AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROUS HORN

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

My name is Linda A. Infante and I am an Executive Committee member of the Connecticut Chapter of the Sierra Club. Founded in 1892, we are the oldest environmental organization in the United States. The mission of the Club is "To explore, enjoy and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the Earth's ecosystem and resources; educating and enlisting humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and using all lawful means to carry out these objectives." We respectfully submit this testimony to the Environment Committee of the State of Connecticut General Assembly.

We are urging the passage of H.B.5578 that bans or prohibits the trafficking and sale of ivory and rhino horn from Africa through China and elsewhere to the U.S. We have also offered our support to the Connecticut Chapter of The Humane Society of the United States on the passage of this bill.

After the decimation of countless elephants and rhinoceros through the 1970s up to 1989, Africa enacted anti-poaching bans which have been a failure. Poaching continued to escalate. It is known that the poaching is carried out by a number of terrorist and militia groups operating within Africa. These groups are responsible for the slaughter of elephants and rhinos and illegal trafficking of their parts on the black market.

Prior to the 1970s there had been approximately 1.4 million elephants on the African continent. Currently, only 500,000 remain in the wild. Counts show that approximately 38,000 are killed each year. It is estimated that at this rate the elephant in the wild will go extinct within a dozen or so years. The rhino is suffering the same fate as the elephant since the population has been reduced by 97% of what it used to be. At the present time, the Northern White Rhino is extinct and all other types of rhinos are severely endangered. It should be noted that the rate of reproduction for both these species is less than the rate at which they are poached. The situation is critical. In addition to the killing of these animals there also a loss of human life. Approximately one hundred rangers have been killed by ambush each

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year trying to protect these animals in wildlife parks. At this point about 1000 rangers have lost their lives. Also, civilian populations that live near or in areas that support elephant and rhino ranges are frequently subjected to poaching-related terrorism and violence.

The U.S. is second to China in the world ivory market. The value of smuggled raw, uncut ivory from elephants is estimated at \$3,000/kg. Once the tusks from elephants are cut up and fashioned into any number items such as jewelry, gun handles, and other ornamentation the value escalates enormously. It has become a multimillion dollar business per year. Contraband ivory is then “laundered” by corrupt individuals including shady officials, middlemen and smugglers . Then it is mixed with existing legal ivory and openly sold all over the world, frequently as “old ivory.” The profits from ivory is vastly enriching the various genocidal militias and terror groups in Africa. This money finances the horrible crimes they commit as reported from world news: kidnappings of Nigerian school girls, pressing male children into their service as soldiers, and massacres. It also pays for the weapons such as AK-47s, G3s and M16s that are used to kill the elephants and rangers that get in the way.

The circumstances are the same for the rhinoceros. The value of rhino horn on the illicit market is worth up to \$65,000/kg. It should be noted that rhino horn is simply composed of keratin, the same substance as in human hair and fingernails. Science has long proven that rhino horn has no medicinal qualities and yet they are still being slaughtered for their horns.

Passing this bill can make a major difference to put an end to poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking of ivory and rhino horn. This bill can help stop the extinction of these iconic animals. Further, Connecticut has an opportunity to stand in solidarity with other states that have passed similar laws: California, New Jersey, New York and Washington. In addition, bills such as ours have been filed in Maryland, Massachusetts, Vermont and other states. Additionally, by cutting off the illegal sales of these products, it will cut off the flow of money that the terrorist groups in Africa rely on and should help promote stability within that continent.

As a representative of the Sierra Club I am making an impassioned plea to our legislators to make the right decision and pass bill H.B. 5578.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this most important issue.

Sincerely yours,

Linda A. Infante

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Connecticut Chapter of the Sierra Club

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