



March 8, 2016

Chair Ted Kennedy
Chair James Albis
Joint Committee on Environment

Re: Support of HB 5578: Ivory/rhino horn ban bill

Dear Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, and the members of the Joint Committee on Environment,

On behalf of our nearly 9,000 Connecticut members and supporters, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) submits this letter in strong support of H.B. 5578, which would restrict trafficking of ivory and rhino horn in the state.

Elephants and rhinos are facing a crisis driven by increasing consumer demand for their ivory and horn. IFAW has long been at the leading edge of this issue, including our groundbreaking investigations into Chinese ivory markets (2008), internet sales of illegal wildlife (2008, 2012, and 2015), the links between national security and poaching (2008 and 2013), and an analysis of the United States' ivory markets and related regulatory systems (2014).

In all of these studies we have found overwhelming evidence that the legal trade in wildlife products helps to obscure and propagate a parallel market in illicit products. Interpol, the international police agency, estimates that customs officers only interdict 10% of smuggled goods. The U.S. is one of the top global markets for ivory, and given the large volume of international trade that passes through New Haven, Bridgeport, New London, and other points of entry and egress, it is likely that significant quantities of illegal wildlife products pass through border inspections undetected, to be sold openly in Connecticut under cover of assumed legality.

We are currently working to support and strengthen the United States Fish & Wildlife Service's efforts to restrict domestic commerce in ivory, and we welcome Connecticut's complementary efforts to enact state-level protections through H.B. 5578. Fortunately, Connecticut is not alone in its determination to enact state conservation measures: New York and New Jersey passed bills to regulate ivory and rhino horn trade in 2014, California passed a similar ban in 2015, and Washington State voters overwhelmingly approved a ballot initiative to restrict commerce in a broad suite of threatened and endangered species (also in 2015). Several other states have bills currently moving through their respective legislatures including Hawaii and Massachusetts. The world is making

strides to protect elephants and rhinos from poachers. Let's give Connecticut the distinction of helping change the global conversation on this critical issue.

IFAW believes the world is a better place when we protect our fellow creatures. By banning the sale of endangered wildlife products in your state, you can send the message to poachers, traffickers, and consumers that we value our world's animals more than needless trinkets and ornaments. Stopping this bloody trade will reap benefits for wildlife, international security, aid anti-corruption efforts, enable more effective use of our law enforcement funding here and abroad, and give our descendants the chance to share this planet with some of the planet's truly most majestic creatures.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter LaFontaine". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Peter" being larger and more prominent than the last name "LaFontaine".

Peter LaFontaine
Campaigns Officer
International Fund for Animal Welfare

Founded in 1969, IFAW saves animals in crisis around the world. With projects in more than 40 countries, IFAW rescues individual animals, works to prevent cruelty to animals, and advocates for the protection of wildlife and habitats. For more information, visit www.ifaw.org.