

COALITION OF CONNECTICUT SPORTSMEN

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Testimony presented to the Environment Committee

IN OPPOSITION to *Raised Bill No. 5578 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROS HORN*

by Robert T. Crook, Director March 11, 2016

Virtually everyone is opposed to the exploitation of African and other nation's wildlife by poaching and other illegal activity. Sportsmen share that position.

The Coalition of CT sportsmen is opposed to this bill because, if implemented, it would amount to the taking of property that had been acquired legally and in good faith; it imposes unreasonable use of law enforcement resources to a **non-public safety issue** And while it is doubtful that state/local will enforce, it will fall to DEEP ENCON officers, currently understaffed and overburdened; it prohibitively diminishes businesses such as the many state taxidermists, antique dealers, and eliminates many private collections containing ivory; Promotes state and federal court cases particularly concerning a taking; and reduces freedom of action by essentially prohibiting trophy hunting by CT residents in foreign countries.

This bill as with "Cecil's Law" would prohibit legally taken African and other nation's wildlife hunting trophies. The Endangered Species Act, the Lacey Act, and the African Elephant Conservation Act are federal laws that already extensively restrict the importation, possession and trade of endangered and threatened species. In addition, Connecticut state laws already protect local wildlife and prohibit the possession of any animal product from another country where the wildlife is known to have been killed illegally. **Even though advocates for this bill claim this legislation is needed to protect African species, the bills' prohibitions will not protect wildlife.**

Wildlife management and law enforcement on the African continent is the answer, as it is here. The objective of which is 'to promote activities that demonstrate sustainably managed natural resources that result in social development and economic growth, and in suitable partnership between local communities and government. Controlled hunting has resulted in a win-win situation for both humans earning a livelihood, and conservation of wildlife. Wildlife meat is donated to the local populations. It takes into account attracting tourists and hunting in a managed and sustainable way. Hunting resorts are under the strict supervision of local/state equivalents of the DEEP.

Since the 1990s the African elephant population has grown and stabilized at approximately 420,000 - 650,000 throughout Africa. Similarly, the southern white rhino population is growing in South Africa. Since 1968, South Africa has permitted hunting of southern white rhino and data from the IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group shows that since hunting began, the management numbers of southern white rhino have increased from 1,800 to over 20,000.

The Statement of Purpose of this bill is to prohibit the sale and trade of ivory and rhinoceros horn in the state. The question then is: **What data is produced that demonstrates there is a problem in CT?**

Secondly The Endangered Species Act, the Lacey Act, and the African Elephant Conservation Act are federal laws that already extensively restrict the importation, possession and trade of endangered and threatened species. In addition, Connecticut state laws already protect local wildlife and prohibit the possession of any animal product from another country where the wildlife is known to have been killed illegally. **Why then is DEEP tasked with yet another bureaucratic exercise further limiting assets when Federal/State procedures are currently in place?**

Again, this bill will do nothing to prohibit the illegal poaching in other nations but will cause our own, hunters, taxidermists and antique dealers, and others in jeopardy; it will also promote state and federal court cases. We see no benefit to either other nations or CT.

We urge Rejection

Thank you.