

3. March 2016

Connecticut Legislature
Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am contacting you on behalf of the Manchester Pipe Band, of Manchester CT. The Manchester Pipe Band was founded in 1914 by World War 1 veterans returning to Manchester after the war who wanted their own bagpipe band to represent the Scottish and Irish heritage of their community of largely mill workers in the textile mills of Manchester.

Since that time, residents of Manchester have devoted thousands of hours of volunteer time to the cultivation of this band. Our band has represented Manchester at local, regional, and international musical competition, and has won prizes at many international musical competitions, at the highest levels. The town of Manchester is recognized as one of the most engaged communities in the art and tradition of bagpiping in the United States. Enacting this Bill #227 would erode over a century of dedicated and specialized work.

Manufacturers of bagpipes used elephant ivory to decorate their instruments prior to the 1975 CITES ban. While the incorporation of ivory in the manufacture of these instruments was purely ornamental, their trade post-1975, and their current use is indelible to the understanding and development of our instrument, and the industry's adaptation to regulation in other areas. Original designs of instruments from classical Scottish manufacturers are studied endlessly in order to produce contemporary models of these instruments. For a cottage industry, bagpipe manufacturers have demonstrated a remarkable ability to innovate and adapt to changing conditions. For example where in 1940, a bagpipe could have been manufactured with exotic Ebony or African Blackwood with Elephant Ivory mounts, reeds made of cane, and a bag made of sheep- or goat-skin. A bagpipe manufactured today could be made from sustainably harvested Cocobolo wood, moose-antler mounts, reeds made of carbon-fiber, and a bag made of Gore-Tex. These innovations would not have been possible without the heirloom instruments – sometimes with ivory mounts – to use as examples, and controls in product development. Bagpipe manufacturers can and will continue to innovate, but SB-227 would deal the industry, and bagpipers – particularly in Connecticut – a death blow.

On a more practical side from the perspective of the Manchester Pipe Band, we strive every day to encourage more students to take up the pipes as a hobby, and we have been met with some success in enrolling students of all ages and professions. The harsh measures proposed under SB-227 would make criminals of the school teachers, engineers, police- and fire-men, construction workers, retirees, and students who are bound together by the common mission to continue our State's Scottish and Irish heritage.

Further, if the bill were enacted, our efforts to hold events in the State of Connecticut would be diminished. The band regularly hosts guest instructors and performers for workshops and lessons with our own members, as well as open public events. The band plays at over 50 public events per year,



mostly between April and October, between public and private ceremonies, graduations, parades, and memorial services. In some instances, bagpipers travel from great distances to learn, compete, or perform with the Manchester Pipe Band – this bill would end that.

We recognize that the implications of illegal hunting and poaching in Africa – as well as elsewhere – are enormous. Every feasible effort must be made to protect wild fauna and flora, especially those species which are threatened or endangered. However, SB-227 unfairly, and severely, penalizes law-abiding citizens for their mere ownership of a legally purchased and traded item. We implore the committee to explore a more efficient way of affecting the root of the illegal trade in ivory, and not to unfairly criminalize innocent individuals.

Respectfully Submitted,

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