

Testimony Submitted to the Environment Committee:

S.B. No. 227: AN ACT CONCERNING CECIL'S LAW: To prohibit the import, sale and trade of big-game hunting trophies from overseas.

Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, Senator Chapin, Representative Shaban, and Members of the Governance Committee,

As the Chief Executive Officer of the Connecticut Historical Society, and on behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony about this bill. The CHS sympathizes with and supports ending the poaching of endangered animals. This is a horrific act that should not be tolerated by any government or nation.

I thank the committee for exempting museums in this bill. However, we are concerned about the broad language used in Section 1, Part A. As written, this section is over reaching and because of this will severely cripple the ability of hundreds of historical organizations in Connecticut to continue to document our history, and prevent the public from fully understanding the impact and need for environmental conservation. This is because we will no longer be able to intentionally collect through the critical network of antiques market for the purchase of artifacts that document the history of Connecticut's role in international trade. Therefore we also propose that antiques be exempted from this bill. Despite claims otherwise it is absolutely possible to prove beyond reasonable doubt that material used in the antique was not acquired through illegal poaching. We do this by researching the provenance and origins of the objects in our collections; research that is guided by professional standards and is followed stringently by museums and cultural organizations.

Connecticut has a historical connection with the ivory trade. In the 1700s lasting through World War II, the Village of Ivoryton and other areas in the lower Connecticut River Valley held a monopoly on the importation and manufacture of ivory products in the United States. This industry led to the exploitation of the African Bush Elephant and enslavement of thousands of humans. Our history reveals the negative outcomes of the ivory trade and how consumer demand for "exotic" materials can lead to the endangerment of a species.

This history, its documentation and interpretation, provides powerful lessons about how the actions of individuals can lead to environmental disaster. But without the actual physical evidence of these past actions – made real through the display and use of Connecticut's historic objects, many of which contain ivory – these lessons become legend and hearsay. At the CHS we use items such as combs, piano keys, and figurines made with and of ivory to help tens of

thousands of school children understand the global impact of their actions, and to make better decisions today. We do this through programs and exhibitions like *Connecticut: 50 Objects/50 Stories* which documents the stories that define us as a people, place and idea. In this exhibit, an ivory comb manufactured in Ivoryton represented the good and bad consequences of Connecticut's transatlantic trade.

To close, illegal poaching should be stopped, but not at the cost of historical amnesia. It is through our history, the documenting and sharing of our stories, that we learn how our current situation has come to be. By allowing us to continue the important work of history we can stop today's poaching from becoming tomorrow's antiques.

We look forward to working with this committee and this issue's other stakeholders to find a reasonable middle ground that, using our history as example, will prevent further needless destruction.

Thank you,



Jody Blankenship
Chief Executive Officer, Connecticut Historical Society