Dear Co-Chair Kennedy, Co-Chair Miner, Co-Chair Demicco, Vice Chair Flexer, Vice Chair Gresko, Vice Chair Somers, Ranking Member Harding, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

I care about animals, including wildlife, and I vote.

Please accept this public hearing testimony for the following 5 bills, and a request to bring up HB 5615 (which would allow towns to ban trapping):

1) OPPOSE SB 522 -- would allow bear hunting, which I strongly oppose. Learning how to remove attractants (e.g., accessible garbage, pet food left outside) and, if necessary, how to haze and exclusion strategies, are the humane, simple, effective, and science-based solutions to conflicts with wildlife. An outrageous claim being made by proponents is that population size will double every few years, but this is not true: bears are a very slow-to-reproduce species, and in addition, have many natural checks to their population size, including the phenomenon of delayed implantation. Slow reproduction rates make bear populations susceptible to overhunting. We must learn from recent experiences in other states, such as New Jersey where even mothers and cubs were recklessly killed, or Florida, where the state agency had to stop the hunt after one year because too many bears were killed. With only around 700 bears in the entire state of Connecticut, we need to protect our bears from a similar hunting frenzy, and preserve these bears for future generations.

2) OPPOSE HB 5499 -- would expand Sunday hunting to allow use of shotguns, rifles, and muzzleloaders. I want a day to enjoy the woods in peace for myself and my companion animals, and not worry about knowing that animals are suffering, or coming across a suffering animal. This bill does nothing to reduce the incidence of Lyme disease, and will not reduce the deer population in any sustainable way, as the population will bounce back. I disagreed with allowing bow hunting on Sundays, and this is an outrageous expansion that is not fair to the overwhelming majority of non-consumptive users (e.g., hikers, birders, mountain bikers).

3) SUPPORT HB 6335 -- ivory sales ban, which I strongly support, will clamp down on illegal ivory and rhino horn sales by prohibiting the sale of ivory and rhino horn within Connecticut. The illegal trade is horrifically cruel, on a scale that threatens extinction, is a known funding source for major terrorist organizations, and over a thousand park rangers have been killed by poachers while on duty. NY and NJ have passed laws, and CT needs to join them, else we will be become a haven for illicit ivory. Last year's bill included a report from the Office of Fiscal Analysis that anticipated 4-8 prosecutions per year if the bill became law...a tacit acknowledgment of ongoing illegal trafficking in our state. State bans are needed because ivory traffickers exploit federal loopholes. Despite federal regulations restricting interstate sale, import, and export of wildlife products, certain ivory and rhino horns, including antiques and pre-CITES items, can be sold under the Endangered Species Act. Criminals capitalize on these loopholes by aging newly harvested ivory so that it appears old or using fraudulent documentation. Thus, legal trade serves as a cover for illegal ivory trade. This bill would NOT criminalize possession of ivory currently owned by Connecticut residents or prohibit inheritance or noncommercial gifts, nor would it restrict the sale or purchase by a museum, nor would it restrict the sale or purchase of bona-fide antiques and musical instruments that meet certain requirements.

4) SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS, SB 942 -- Cecil's law, anti -trophy hunting.

Amendment recommendations: please see testimony submitted by The HSUS, which include details on making sure that federal law does not pre-empt our efforts, and making sure that this bill does not weaken existing CT law. Another recommendation includes defining "Africa Big Five" as its traditionally defined (which includes African buffalo and puts white and black rhinos into one category, not two) -- the current language does not include African buffalo, a commonly imported trophy animal that is deserving of the safeguards of this proposed bill.

I support anti- trophy hunting measures. Hunters prefer to kill the largest and the strongest animals, usually males with the most impressive manes, tusks, horns, etc. These animals are endowed with the best genes for survival and once killed, their strong genes are lost to future generations. Further, the social biology of some species means that killing the strongest male will result in scores of additional deaths. For example, when a dominant African lion is killed, he leaves females and cubs vulnerable to a hostile pride takeover from another male, in which case the new male will kill the cubs of the previous lion.Killing the strongest males may also negatively impact people. When dominant males are killed, juveniles who are more daring and less experienced and prone to killing livestock may move into the area.Trophy hunting is not conservation. Many animals, including the Africa Big Five, are killed in countries (such as Tanzania and Zimbabwe) with widespread corruption that prevents money raised from trophy hunting from benefiting conservation efforts, as hunters claim it does. Forty-five airlines have stopped transporting some or all types of hunting trophies, especially that of the Africa Big Five.

5) SUPPORT HB 6334 -- would require registration for all brick-and-mortar animal shelters and allow for inspections and creation of regulations that define standards of care. This would potentially allow for early interventions that can serve to remedy problems before they escalate into conditions that would warrant prosecution under animal cruelty statutes (CGS 53-247), both preventing animal suffering and saving taxpayer dollars associated with prosecution of cruelty cases.

6) Finally, in these last days of public hearings, I ask that you consider bringing up HB 5615 for a public hearing. HB 5615 would give local control to allow municipalities to determine whether or not they want to ban trapping. Trapping is cruel and indiscriminate (dogs, cats, and birds are often caught in these traps), and not effective in curbing undesired behavior. Further, trapping does not control population size due to the high compensatory reproduction ability exhibited by most fur-bearing species. Learning how to remove attractants, exclusion strategies where possible, and, if necessary, how to haze, are the humane, simple, effective, and science-based solutions that I support, and I want my town to be able to take as stand against the cruel, ineffective, and indiscriminate practice of trapping. Our neighbors in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Jersey are among other states who have banned or severely restricted use of leghold and body-crushing traps.

Yours truly,

Susan Casagrande

West Hartford, CT

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