Via Electronic Mail  
Members of the Environment Committee  
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Re: Testimony from the Center for Biological Diversity in Support of H.B. 5394 and the Amendment Submitted by HSUS

Approximately every 22 minutes an elephant is poached for its ivory. By banning ivory and rhino sales in Connecticut you are helping to eliminate the market for illegally poached ivory and horn to be laundered and sold to unsuspecting consumers. Please accept the following testimony from the Center for Biological Diversity in support of H.B. 5394 and the amendment thereto offered by HSUS.

According to INTERPOL and UNEP: “Abuse of the environment is the fourth largest criminal activity in the world. Worth up to USD 258 billion, it is increasing by five to seven per cent every year and converging with other forms of international crime. It is, therefore, a growing threat to peace, security and stability.”¹ The GAO noted that “various sources estimated the global scale of illegal wildlife trade to be from $7 billion to $23 billion annually.”² The US Department of State classifies wildlife trafficking as a security threat.³

Nevertheless, in the United States we often think of wildlife trafficking as a problem plaguing other parts of the world, when in reality the United States has a significant market. A recent report concluded that “one-third of the illicit ivory seized [world-wide] was destined for markets outside China and Southeast Asia” and pointed a finger at the United States as a destination country for both trafficked ivory and rhino horn.⁴ According to the GAO, “[t]he United States is one of the world’s largest trafficking markets and is increasingly becoming a source for illegal wildlife and wildlife products . . . .”⁵

Of course, in 2016 the United States enacted a “near” ivory ban. But that near ban did not foreclose solely intra-state sales of ivory and neither do federal protections for rhinos. Therefore, the opportunity to continue to launder illicit ivory and rhino horn through state sales remains a threat. Thus, the bill before you is an important component to halting the United States’ role in ivory and rhino horn trafficking.

³ See, e.g., https://www.state.gov/e/oes/rls/rpts/286539.htm  
Closing markets can and has made a difference for wildlife. Mounting scientific research and evidence support the utility of closing domestic markets. For example, in a report prepared by the Environmental Law Institute for the CITES Secretariat on domestic ivory markets, the researchers found that in each country that had enacted an ivory ban (or near ban) that “the legal ivory markets are shrinking.”6 The report further documented that bans in some countries “have had the effect of shifting ivory markets to other countries.”7 Other research also documents that traders will shift to open or lenient markets.8 Thus, the existence of any remaining unregulated legal ivory markets provides an opportunity for the black market to flourish.

This is why it is crucial that as key ivory markets in the Unites States (such as New York, California, and other states) have halted ivory and rhino horn sales that remaining states with active markets follow suit – and encourage others to do the same.9 Momentum is growing globally for the closure of domestic ivory markets10 and a proposal was just introduced at CITES to close domestic rhino horn markets as well.11 Closing markets, reducing demand, and educating consumers all cut off the demand and are essential tools for ensuring the preservation of elephants and rhinos in the future. We applaud Connecticut for taking up H.B. 5394 and doing its part to end elephant and rhino poaching.

Time is of the essence to address the poaching crisis. In 1973 there were estimated to be 1.3 million elephants in Africa12 but by the end of 2015 the IUCN African elephant specialist group estimated just 415,428 elephants – or a 68% decline.13 The group highlighted that

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6 SC70 Inf. 18 at 16.
7 SC70 Inf. 18 at 16. We were dismayed by the Secretariat’s questioning of this phenomenon as it is well documented.
8 Titeca, K. (2018). Understanding the illegal ivory trade and traders: evidence from Uganda. International Affairs, 94(5), 1077-1099. ("This leniency distinguishes Uganda from neighbouring countries, where prosecution has been more effective and sentencing more severe. For example, Tanzania has given prison sentences of twelve, 20 and 35 years for wildlife smuggling. In the last of these cases, two Chinese men, having been found with 706 elephant tusks, received a prison sentence after failing to pay a fine of US$25 million. In Kenya, equally severe sentences were given for the possession of ivory. For example, in January 2014 a Chinese ivory smuggler was sentenced to a fine of US$233,000 or seven years in prison for possessing a tusk weighing 3.4 kg. In another case, an ivory smuggler was sentenced to 20 years in prison. In consequence of these prosecutions, Uganda, where these kinds of sentences have never occurred, came to be seen as a safe haven for traders in illegal wildlife. According to a Ugandan wildlife officer: ‘Many of the smugglers have shifted from Kenya to Uganda. For example, Guineans had shifted from Nairobi to here. When Kenya became strict in their laws: very many did settle here!’").
between 2006-15, about 111,000 elephants were lost.\textsuperscript{14} African elephants are currently classified as “Threatened” with extinction by the IUCN.

Elephant populations in Asia are even smaller estimated by the IUCN specialist group in 2003 as 41,410–52,345 elephants.\textsuperscript{15} Asian elephants are currently assessed to be “Endangered” by the IUCN.\textsuperscript{16}

Recent reports and papers document the on-going loss of elephants to poaching.\textsuperscript{17} An October 2017 report to an intersessional CITES meeting documenting 2017 poaching rates demonstrated increased poaching rates even in Central and Southern Africa\textsuperscript{18} this indicates that poaching is shifting and former strongholds are no longer safe from poachers. On-going poaching has significant impacts on elephant conservation, elephants, and their populations.\textsuperscript{19} It has even been tied to increases in human-elephant conflicts.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{14} Id.
\textsuperscript{15} https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/7140/12828813#population
\textsuperscript{18} SC70 Doc. 49.1 at 7-8.
\textsuperscript{20} Keigwin, M., Wabukawo, V., Wasser, S. K., & Chapman, C. A. (2018). Impacts on transboundary elephant movements between Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area, Uganda and Parc National des Virunga, Democratic Republic of Congo. Pachyderm, (57), 118-121 (available at: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/eb1d/7751339e4560a8b009bc5ee9eaa66b5112a5.pdf) (Concluding that “if legal ivory sales increase poaching (Wasser et al. 2010), and poaching can increase human elephant conflict, legal ivory sales could do more to increase human elephant conflict than to curb it”).
Rhinos have even smaller populations. In total they are estimated at 27,966 based on the following breakdown: black rhino at 4,880 as of 2010\(^\text{21}\); white rhino at 20,170 as of 2010\(^\text{22}\); Indian rhino at 2,575 in 2007\(^\text{23}\); Javan rhino at 46-66 in 2008\(^\text{24}\); and Sumatran rhinos at fewer than 275 in 2008.\(^\text{25}\) Since 2008, 7,127 rhinoceroses were killed by poachers in South Africa alone.\(^\text{26}\) In 2015, “nearly one in 20 wild rhinos were killed” by poachers.\(^\text{27}\)

According to the IUCN, three rhino species are Critically Endangered – black rhinos, Javan rhinos and Sumatran rhinos; greater one-horned rhinos are “Vulnerable”; and white rhinos are Near Threatened.

With elephants and rhinos both facing extinction, the time for action is now.

At the Center for Biological Diversity we believe a future without elephants and rhinos is a very sad place. Avoiding that future requires us to do everything in our power to halt the trend toward extinction. By taking up this bill you are fighting for our future – a future with iconic elephants and rhinos in it. Thank you.

\(^{21}\) https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/6557/16980917
\(^{22}\) https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/4185/16980466
\(^{23}\) https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/19496/8928657
\(^{24}\) https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/19495/8925965
\(^{25}\) https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/6553/12787457