



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 20

### AN ACT PROHIBITING THE IMPORT, SALE, AND POSSESSION OF AFRICAN ELEPHANTS, LIONS, LEOPARDS, BLACK RHINOCEROS, WHITE RHINOCEROS, AND GIRAFFES

February 13, 2019

**To:** Honored Chairs Sen. Cohen and Rep. Demicco and Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee

**From:** Lori Brown, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **IN SUPPORT OF SB 20**, An Act Prohibiting the Import, Sale, and Possession of African Elephants, Lions, Leopards, Black Rhinoceros, White Rhinoceros, and Giraffes.

Poaching has decimated the population of African elephants, lions, leopards, black rhinoceros, white rhinoceros, and giraffes. These animals are **critical to maintaining the ecological biodiversity of their regions**. Additionally, elephants, lions, leopards, rhinoceros and giraffes are **important cogs in local tourist economies**.

**Illegal poaching is a major source of funding for criminal organizations and terrorist groups.** Boko Haram, the Nigerian terrorist group closely linked to ISIL, is responsible for an estimated 25,000 elephant deaths over the past ten years. The Lord's Resistance Army, led by infamous murderer Joseph Kony, has poached hundreds of elephants in order to fund their operations. In 2013, President Obama recognized wildlife trafficking as an escalating global crisis.

Many trophy hunters claim the money they spend goes towards local conservation efforts, therefore offsetting their actions. But the evidence contradicts their claim. A study found that **only 3% of trophy hunting revenue is used for conservation related activities**. Additionally, trophy hunting enables illegal poaching by creating a legal market for poachers to sell their goods. Since South Africa began allowing trophy hunting in 2004, poaching has increased by over 5000%.

The majority of lions killed for sport can be attributed to American tourists. **From 2005-2015, Connecticut residents killed thirty-nine lions and one giraffe**, then proceeded to import their trophies. Additional permits were obtained by Connecticut residents to hunt and kill African elephants in Botswana, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.

The United States currently has no protections in place for giraffes and insufficient protection in place for African elephants, lions, leopards and rhinoceros. **Connecticut must step up and do**

**its part to protect delicate ecosystems, thwart illegal poachers, stabilize local economies, and cut off funding to terrorist and criminal groups.**

On behalf of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voter, I urge you to **VOTE YES ON SB 20**, and pass a statewide ban on the import, sale and possession of the “big five” species.

Thank you for your consideration as you deliberate on SB 20.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lori Brown".

Lori Brown

Executive Director

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