



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 925

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

March 2, 2021

To: Honored Co-Chairs Sen. Cohen and Rep. Borer, and Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee

From: Megan Macomber, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

On behalf of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters (CTLCV), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony **IN SUPPORT of SB 925** to prohibit the import, sale and possession of African Elephants, Lions, Leopards, Black Rhinoceros, White Rhinoceros, and Giraffes.

Poaching has decimated many populations of Africa's endangered species. **These animals are critical to maintaining the ecological biodiversity of their regions**, but their survival is being threatened by climate change, loss of habitat, and high rates of poaching and hunting.

While poaching is now illegal in many African countries, Westerners still indulge in trophy hunting missions to kill endangered species and take home trophy hides. These hunters defend false claims that the money they spend goes towards local conservation efforts, but a 2013 study by *Economists at Large* found that **only 3% of trophy hunting revenue is used for conservation related activities**.

The majority of lions killed for sport can be attributed to American tourists. **From 2005-2020, Connecticut residents killed 71 leopards, 39 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. Not only does this result in abuse of these animals, but it has also contributed to instability and economic dependency in many of these regions. **Illegal poaching remains a major source of funding for criminal organizations and terrorist groups**.

The threats to the big 6 have only increased in past years. In 2018 the U.S. lifted the ban on importing some elephant and lion trophies. Poaching rates then soared in 2020 because the pandemic prevented travel for wildlife watching which normally deters poachers. It is critical that states lead the way to ban the importation, sale and possession of these animals. **Animals listed as threatened and endangered can still be trophy hunted with permits**. By banning the import of these body parts, CT eliminates its market for endangered wildlife trophies, and joins 9 other states in passing laws to restrict or ban the sale of endangered animal products. Our state must step up and do its part to help protect delicate ecosystems, thwart illegal poachers and cut off funding to terrorist and criminal groups.

We at CTLCV urge the committee to **SUPPORT SB 925**, and pass a statewide ban on the import, sale and possession of the "Big Six African species". Thank you for your consideration as you deliberate on this bill.