



TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT OF HB 5251**  
AN ACT PROHIBITING THE POSSESSION AND TRADE OF SHARK FINS

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 HB 5251**, An Act Prohibiting the Possession and Trade of Shark Fins.

The practice of **shark finning is brutal, wasteful, and extraordinarily disruptive to our ocean ecosystems**. Shark fins are removed while the animal is still alive. They are then thrown back into the ocean and left to die painful deaths from shock, blood loss, and starvation, results in the deaths of tens of millions of sharks each year.

Harvested fins are used to make shark fin soup, a delicacy in many parts of the world—and a dish served off-menu or on “secret menus” at some Connecticut establishments.

Sharks are a stabilizing predator in a variety of ocean ecosystems, but because of shark finning, **numerous species have been pushed to the brink of extinction**. Without them, other populations of fish can expand exponentially, disrupting natural processes and threatening commercial fishing resources.

The practice of shark finning is banned nationwide, but the trade of shark fins has been allowed to continue in most states, including Connecticut. **By allowing the trade and use of shark fins, Connecticut implicitly supports the global shark fin trade.**

A 2017 letter from over one hundred marine scientists demanded a ban on the trade or possession of shark fins for ecological and moral reasons. In addition, eleven states have banned the trade or possession of shark fins, including our neighbors, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New York. It is time for Connecticut to do the same.

**By instituting this ban on shark fin possession and trade, Connecticut will do its part to stabilize our ocean ecosystems and stop the horrific practice of finning.**

In conjunction with the Humane Society of Connecticut, the Connecticut League of Conservation voters supports the following amendment to HB 5251:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Title 26 of the general statutes entitled “FISHERIES AND GAME,” Chapter 490 (“Fisheries and Game”), is amended by adding thereto the following new part:

**PART X – TRADE IN SHARK FINS**

26-186b. Definitions. As used in this part:

- (a) “Shark” means any species of the subclass Elasmobranchii; and
- (b) “Shark fin” means the raw, dried, or otherwise processed detached fin, or the raw, dried, or otherwise processed detached tail, of a shark.

**26-186c. Prohibition.**

- (a) Except as provided in this part no person shall possess, sell, offer for sale, trade, or distribute a shark fin.
- (b) A person who holds a license or permit to take or land sharks may separate a shark fin from a lawfully landed shark during the ordinary course of preparing the body of the shark for consumption, sale, trade, or distribution; provided, however, that a shark fin so separated from the shark shall be immediately destroyed unless used by the person for the purposes of taxidermy and subsequent display.
- (c) The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection may issue a permit for the possession of a shark fin to a person conducting noncommercial, scientific research.
- (d) A shark fin seized by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection through the enforcement of this section shall be destroyed.

**26-186d. Penalty.**

Any person who violates any provision of this part shall be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor. Each shark fin possessed, sold, offered for sale, traded, or distributed in violation of this part shall constitute a separate offense.

Section 2. This Act shall take effect six (6) months after the date on which it is enacted.

Section 3. The provisions of this chapter are in addition to, and not in lieu of, any other laws protecting imperiled species. This chapter may not be construed to limit any other state laws protecting imperiled species or to prevent a local governing body from adopting and enforcing more stringent laws to protect imperiled species.

Section 4. If any provision or clause of this Act or application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of this Act which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this Act are severable.

Thank you for considering this testimony as you deliberate on HB 5251.

Sincerely,

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

Lori Brown  
Executive Director

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