



**SIERRA
CLUB**

Connecticut Chapter
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Testimony Before the Environment Committee, Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Dear Environment Committee Chairs Cohen and Borer, Vice-Chairs Slap and Gresko, Ranking Members Harding and Miner, and distinguished members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Sierra Club and our more than 40,000 members and supporters in Connecticut, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 925 and HB 6502.

Senate Bill 925 An Act Prohibiting the Import, Sale and Possession of African Elephants, Lions, Leopards, Black Rhinoceros, White Rhinoceros and Giraffes

Sierra Club Connecticut supports, with some concerns, Senate Bill 925. We support this bill with the hopes that it will achieve the goal of protecting these animals and stopping trophy hunting. The concerns pertain to the exemptions noted in Section 1(h) to 1(j).

The United States is the world's largest importer of animal trophies, which includes the animals listed in this bill, whose populations are all in serious decline. African lion populations have declined by 42% in the past 21 years, leopards by 30% in the last 25 years and giraffes have suffered a decline of 40% since 1990.¹ Elephant numbers have dropped from 10 million in 1930 to 415,000 in 2016.² As of 2016, black and white rhino populations are 5,630 and 18,000 respectively.³ Trophy hunting exacerbates the pressures on these imperiled species. This is a serious concern and steps must be taken to combat this.

Hunting not only kills one animal, it affects the entire population and ecosystem. Large males are often the most sought by hunters. For instance, when a large male lion is killed, it has a rippling effect on the lives of existing cubs (often killed by new males moving into the pride) and causes undue stress on the female lions. It also changes their behavior, the time and location they feed and rest, and their territorial boundaries.⁴ In Mozambique, years of poaching big male elephants for their tusks has created conditions favorable to elephants being born without tusks. This changes the way they

¹ <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

² <https://www.worldwildlife.org/magazine/issues/winter-2018/articles/the-status-of-african-elephants>

³ <https://rhinos.org/about-rhinos/state-of-the-rhino/>

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<https://www.scottramsay.africa/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Loveridge-et-al-2007-impact-of-trophy-hunting-on-lion-population-dynamics-in-Hwange.pdf>



eat, how they interact with their environment, and has an effect on the lives of smaller creatures that depend on elephants for survival.⁵

Trophy hunting is often touted as an economic boom for local economies in African countries. The research shows this is not so. A report prepared by Economists at Large that studied the economic benefit of trophy hunting in Botswana, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe shows the actual impact on local communities. Trophy hunting creates minimal jobs (7500-15500) and is roughly only 0.03% of the GDP, while overall tourism is between 2.8%-5.1% of GDP. Trophy hunters only make up around 0.1% of tourists and creates only 0.78% of the overall tourism spending. The employment is only 0.76% or less of the average direct tourism employment in the studied countries.⁶ The economic arguments to continue trophy hunting in these countries is simply not there.

The fees collected from hunting permits are often said to fund conservation efforts. Again, the actual numbers tell a different story. Across the continent, trophy hunters pay an estimated 200 million USD/year for hunting permits. Less than 3% of that goes toward conservation funds.⁷ Increased legal hunting has been shown to actually increase poaching,⁸ risking not only the lives of the animals, but of park rangers, law enforcement, and the people living in the surrounding communities.

Polls show that it is very unpopular here in the United States. The Remington Research Group has shown in a poll that 80% of respondents opposed both the hunting and importing of African lions, elephants and other wildlife (and their parts) into the US. This included 80% of Republicans, 84% of Democrats and 76% of nonpartisan voters. These are significant numbers, showing where public sentiment lies.

We have an opportunity in Connecticut to help stop the spread of trophy hunting and poaching, and to help save these majestic animals from extinction. By prohibiting the import of elephants, lions, panthers, white rhinos, black rhinos, and giraffes, we reduce the market for them. Trophy hunting raises serious ethical concerns, reduces the world's biodiversity, and has no real economic benefit. The world is experiencing its sixth mass extinction. We lose dozens of species everyday. By 2050, it is predicted that between 20-50% of all species will be extinct. It is imperative that we work to protect the other creatures that inhabit the earth with us before it's too late.

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<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/wildlife-watch-news-tuskless-elephants-behavior-change>

⁶ <https://www.hsi.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/pdfs/economists-at-large-trophy-hunting.pdf>

⁷ <https://naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/missing%20the%20mark.pdf>

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https://s3.amazonaws.com/ifaw-pantheon/sites/default/files/legacy/IFAW_TrophyHuntingReport_US_v2.pdf



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House Bill 6502 An Act Concerning the Use of Certain Polystyrene Products, the Availability of Single-Use Straws, the Release of Certain Balloons and the Compostable Nature of Single-Use Produce Bags

Sierra Club Connecticut supports HB 6502, with recommendations to strengthen and allow for local efforts to further eliminate plastic waste in our communities. The amount of plastic that contaminates our land and waterways is extremely concerning. It is a threat to our wildlife and ecosystems, and to the health of our citizens. The production of plastic items contributes greatly to greenhouse gas emissions that are warming our atmosphere and causing the climate crisis that is already upon us.

Expanded polystyrene (EPS) is not recyclable here in the state and does not break down in the natural environment.⁹ It breaks up into “microplastics” polluting our waterways and threatening marine life. They are a single use item that contributes significantly to our already overburdened waste stream, ending up at the incinerators in Hartford, Bridgeport, and other cities in our state and adding to municipality waste management costs. Many municipalities have already banned EPS food containers, including Groton, Norwalk, Stamford, and Westport. New York State has also passed a ban as well.

Our recommendations to strengthen this section of the bill include phasing out foam lunch tray from school districts and institutes of higher education sooner than July of 2023 and that any statewide ban not preempt municipalities from passing their own policies regarding EPS that may be stronger than what the state prescribes.

We strongly support section 3 of this bill, which prohibits food service establishments from providing single use plastic straws unless requested by a patron. Our shorelines are littered with millions of tons of single-use plastic. Our roadways are littered with single use plastic items. Plastic is a huge waste management problem in general, as 91% of the plastic we use is not recycled. We must work to eliminate it as much as we can.

We recommend amending the language of this bill to apply the same requirements to plastic tableware and that language be clarified to apply to take-out and delivery orders. We also would recommend amending the language to include plastic stirrers in the definition of “single use plastic straws”. Or better yet, prohibit the distribution of plastic stirrers all together.

⁹ <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acssuschemeng.9b06635>



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Helium balloons also pollute our environment and endanger wildlife. Like Polystyrene, they do not biodegrade and instead break up into microplastics. Releasing them into the atmosphere is dangerous and unnecessary. We support a total prohibition on the release of helium balloons and recommend a public education component at the point of sale to inform consumers about the policy and their responsibilities under the law. It should not be allowed.

Many bioplastic products and single use plastic bags are now advertised as compostable or biodegradable. There are many common misconceptions on how these bags impact the environment. If these bags are not disposed of properly, then they are a danger to the air, land, and water of the state the same as traditional plastics. We support a study to determine the compostability of these labeled compostable bags before endorsing their use as a replacement for conventional plastic bags. This study must include how they behave in a variety of settings such as industrial and home composting,

Plastic waste is a danger to our wildlife, environment, and to human health. We must reduce its use wherever possible.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues and consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

Ann Gadwah, Advocacy and Outreach Organizer
Sierra Club CT