

[DATE]

Representative/Senator [FULL NAME]

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**Re: HB 6955 - an act relating to the sale of ivory**

Dear Rep/Senator [SURNAME],

As a supporter of The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (DSWT) I would like to appeal for your help in saving the African elephant and rhino from extinction. The DSWT have witnessed the atrocities caused by the illegal ivory trade for the past 38 years. I have welcomed President Obama's decision to impose a ban on commercial ivory imports in the USA. However, without in-state bans across the USA, we are forced to watch as loopholes are created, allowing criminal groups to smuggle illegal ivory and in turn fulfil the demand for ivory and rhino horn.

The United States remains the second largest market for ivory. The current poaching crisis not only constitutes an immense threat to the most iconic animals, but it is also a matter of global security, with terrorist organisations utilising ivory as a way to fund their atrocities. The illegal wildlife trade now generates an estimated \$23 billion per year and has become the fourth most lucrative illegal activity behind drugs, counterfeiting, and human trafficking. In our most recent report, 'Dead or Alive: Valuing an Elephant' we exposed the true value of elephants to Kenya's economy. Wild elephants are worth 76 times more alive than dead. The benefits to keeping elephants in the wild are endless.

As you know, the ivory trafficking crisis is a complex problem and one which requires action on multiple levels to stem the slaughter of elephants in the wild, which is why we are encouraged to witness such positive action in New Jersey and New York. Both have signed legislation to ban the import and in-state sale of ivory and rhino horn, with New Jersey imposing a full ban. These efforts mark a substantial development in tackling the illegal ivory chain. Loopholes that had previously allowed for some ivory trade in the States are now closed and we are appealing for Connecticut to follow suit with a comprehensive ban to match that in New York. I strongly urge you to support bill HB 6955, with amendment LCO 7261, as opposed to the current amended bill which dangerously exempts all antique ivory, immediately opening the door for illegal ivory – with new ivory being 'artificially dated' to appear as antique - defeating the purpose of the legislation. Amendment LCO 7261 strikes a compromise, allowing the sale of antiques that contain 20 percent or less ivory. There is further pressure to add an exemption for mammoth ivory, this must be strongly opposed. To exempt this would make the task of law enforcement officers close to impossible, as they do not have the funding or means to scientifically test all items to prove their origins.

As a local resident, I am deeply thankful to Connecticut for their foresight and remain hopeful that the State will enact a complete ban. Please demonstrate your commitment in the fight to save the African elephant and rhino. Now is the time to stand united for wildlife.

Yours sincerely,

[FULL NAME]