

March 3, 2021

Representative David Bennett
Chair, House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Rhode Island State House
Providence RI 02908

Re: The Nature Conservancy Supports H 5610 to prohibit breeding animals for captive hunting

Dear Chairman Bennett:

The Nature Conservancy **supports** House Bill 5610, which would prohibit captive hunting, with one minor suggested amendment:

We respectfully request the removal of the words, “for amusement or sport”.

TNC believes that this expanded prohibition would provide greater protections of Rhode Island’s wildlife against dangerous diseases such as Chronic Wasting Disease. Chronic Wasting Disease is a *contagious* and lethal neurological disease. There are currently no known cases in Rhode Island, and we should not import animals that could introduce it to our wildlife population. Even if animals are hunted for food, and not just for sport or amusement, there is a very real threat that captive animals could escape into the wild and spread disease within our native animal populations.

Earlier this session, we also supported H 5058 and H 5329, which also would provide prohibition on captive hunting (we also proposed amendments to H 5058 to strengthen it). Of the three bills before you this session to address captive hunting, we believe that **H 5329** (sponsored by Representative Slater) most fully prohibits the practices that could lead to the disease (such as Chronic Wasting Disease) within our native animal populations.

We support the bill before you today (House Bill 5610) with the amendment we suggested as a good step forward. We recognize, though, that House Bill 5329 would more thoroughly address the concerns we have with captive hunting.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. I am available anytime if I can answer questions or be helpful in any way.

Sincerely,



Sue AnderBois
The Nature Conservancy in Rhode Island

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Working in more than 70 countries, we are tackling climate change, conserving lands, waters and oceans, and helping make cities more sustainable. Here in Rhode Island, we have 4,000 members, and we steward more than 10,000 acres of protected land while maintaining 78 miles of public walking trails.