

March 1, 2025

Representative Joseph J. Solomon, Chair  
House Corporations Committee  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support H.5214 - RELATING TO ANIMALS AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY -- PSITTACINE BIRDS

Dear Chair Solomon and Members of the House Corporations Committee,

I am writing in support of H.5214, the bill to ban the sale of parrots through pet stores and brokers. The trade in parrots entails suffering that cannot be justified by the human desire to keep a captive companion.

Whether parrots are smuggled into the country in plastic bottles and funneled into the black market, or hand-reared by breeders, the birds' intrinsic worth is always secondary to the profit to be gained from their exploitation. Smuggling birds ravages ecosystems, threatens rare species, and results in the deaths of many birds who never make it to market. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2024 World Wildlife Crime Report revealed that parrots and cockatoos made up 4% of all seizures of illegally traded wildlife around the globe between 2015-2021 (UNDOC, 2024). Hand-reared birds are stolen from their captive parents and raised in orphan broods to condition them to human handling. Many hand-reared chicks often fail to thrive, and die before they reach the consumer.

Most people are unable or unwilling to dedicate decades of their lives to provide the enrichment a parrot needs to be emotionally and physically healthy. The relationship between a parrot and its human caregiver is at best co-dependent and, at worst, leads to cruelty and neglect. Parrots are too intellectually and emotionally complex to be fulfilled in the custody of humans. As "pets" they suffer long lives in which they are primarily caged, unable to fly, and prevented from exercising their natural instincts. They frequently resort to compulsive self-harming behaviors like plucking their own feathers. Deprived the company of other birds, they tend to bond strongly with one person in a household and are combative with others. Since parrots often outlive their owners, strongly bonded birds frequently find themselves homeless and unfit for cohabitation with other humans.

Those advocating against this bill have compromising interests. They profit from suffering and/or confuse the possession of a bird with love and respect for it. I have known several bird owners, and in most cases they acquired their birds lacking awareness of the time and effort required to care for them properly. Over time, they have either grown to resent their birds, or become plagued with guilt for failing to provide the lives they knew their birds deserved. I have never known a bird owner who was not trying to find a better home for their bird. Unfortunately, just as there aren't enough of the proverbial farms-in-the-country for unruly dogs, there are far too few sanctuaries for unwanted parrots.

People who truly care about the welfare of parrots should extricate themselves from their unwitting complicity in an intrinsically cruel industry and join the effort to protect the birds' natural habitats. According to the Animal Welfare Institute, nearly one-third of all parrot species are threatened with extinction due to habitat loss and collection (Animal Welfare Institute 2024), and the aforementioned United Nations report revealed that the primary threat to the Endangered White Cockatoos and Chattering Lorys is trade.

Please support the passage of H.5214 to protect parrots from captivity, and to help to ensure that the future holds a place in this world for their wild counterparts.

Sincerely,

Christa Albrecht-Vegas  
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Portsmouth, RI 02871

References cited:

Animal Welfare Institute. (2024). Bird Trade. <https://awionline.org/content/bird-trade>.

UNODC, World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species (Vienna: United Nations publications, 2024). [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/2024/Wildlife2024\\_Final.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/2024/Wildlife2024_Final.pdf).