

February 6, 2024

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

Re: The Nature Conservancy Supports House Bill 7294 to prohibit captive hunting

Dear Chairman Bennett:

The Nature Conservancy is grateful for the opportunity to support House Bill 7294 and to Representatives Slater, Diaz, Bennett, and O'Brien for sponsoring it. The Nature Conservancy **supports** this legislation.

TNC believes that this bill would provide greatest protections for 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 in the extremely likely event that animals escape captivity and interact with native populations.

There have been several bills in the House and Senate in the last few years to address this issue. Our primary priority is that a bill include language to ban *both* native and non-native species into Rhode Island. Even importing animals into Rhode Island that are native to the state (or related to animals native to Rhode Island) could bring preventable diseases – such as Chronic Wasting Disease - into the state that harm our native wildlife populations. The legislation before you today – House Bill 7294 – includes this language.

We respectfully ask that you support the passage of this bill.

Sincerely,



Angela Tuoni
The Nature Conservancy in Rhode Island