

March 20, 2024

Representative Robert Craven, Chair  
Rhode Island House Committee on Judiciary  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: SUPPORT for H. 7454, Trade in Animal Fur Products Act**

Dear Chair Craven and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

I support the Trade in Animal Fur Products Act for many reasons, including the environmental degradation inherent in industrial fur production, the zoonotic threats posed by the unsanitary warehousing of large numbers of animals, and most importantly, the absence of any federal regulation of or accountability for animal abuse which would be prosecutable if perpetrated on a domestic cat or dog.

Animals farmed for fur are crowded in barren enclosures with minimal protection from the elements. They exhibit stress-induced pathologies like self-mutilation, infanticide, and cannibalism, and suffer untreated wounds and infections, as well as the frustration of every natural instinct, only to meet an unmerciful death by bludgeoning, gassing, drowning, suffocation, poison, electrocution, or whatever happens to be the most cost-effective method at hand. It is fairly common for stunned or immobilized animals to be skinned alive for their furs. Regardless of the ethics of killing animals for fashion, most people would not condone the cruelties inherent in fur farming, but there are many otherwise decent people who live by one standard at home, only to leave their compassion at the door when they punch the clock and report to the killing floor.

At last year's hearing before the Senate Environment & Agriculture Committee, concerns were raised that this legislation would prohibit lethal management of wildlife conflicts, specifically with beavers causing roadway flooding in parts of Rhode Island. While I always prefer to see wildlife conflicts managed non-lethally, this bill does not prohibit the extermination of problematic wildlife. Trappers and hunters would still be allowed to take beaver and sell raw pelts. That being said, the Beaver Institute <[beaverinstitute.org](http://beaverinstitute.org)>, a Massachusetts-based non-profit whose mission is to advance beaver management and restore watersheds, trains mitigation professionals in the humane and ecologically sustainable resolution of human/beaver conflicts.

In response to the fur industry's claim that fur is more sustainable than alternative fabrics, I would submit that, in fact, the fur industry, including the manufacturing of fur products, has the largest negative environmental impact of any material used for fashion. It is immensely energy- and resource-intensive, with poor feed-to-fur conversion rates. A recent report by Humane Society International <[https://www.hsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/HSI\\_UK-Furs-Dirty-Footprint\\_Jun23.pdf](https://www.hsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/HSI_UK-Furs-Dirty-Footprint_Jun23.pdf)> revealed that the carbon footprint of mink fur is 31 times higher than cotton, 26 times higher than acrylic, and 25 times higher than polyester. It's air emissions are 271 times higher than acrylic, 215 times higher than cotton and 150 times higher than polyester. The average water consumption of mink, raccoon dog, and fox fur is 104 times higher than acrylic, 91 times higher than polyester and 5 times higher than cotton. Mink produces nearly 400 times water pollution per kilogram than polyester, and on average mink, raccoon dog and fox fur are 100 times more water-polluting than cotton and 75 times more than acrylic.

The notion that one can remove an animal from its skin, dispose of everything but the skin, and call it sustainable is absurd, especially when there are so many plant-based, recycled and synthetic alternatives.

The Trade in Animal Fur Products Act reflects the public's increasing disapproval of fur harvested for fashion. Major designers and retailers are forgoing fur sales in favor of an ever-expanding selection of attractive alternative fabrics. Rhode Island is a leader in passing legislation for the humane treatment of animals. Please add H.7454 to the list of ways Rhode Island has committed to a more compassionate and sustainable standard of living.

Sincerely,

Christa Albrecht-Vegas  
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Portsmouth, RI 02871