

House Judiciary Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

March 19, 2024

Re: Testimony in **Opposition** to House bill No. 7454 – TRADE IN ANIMAL FUR PRODUCTS ACT

Dear Chair Craven and members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am Kay Rhodes, an employee of E. C. Dittrich & Co, Inc., speaking on behalf of my industry of employ, my 23 coworkers, all retail fur stores in America and the black community.

I vehemently oppose H 7454 – An act obliterating the sale of legal fur products with civil penalties for violations of such transactions; namely another attempt to ban the sale of natural fur fashions, a still very relevant product even in this modern age. It is an attack on freedom, individual choice, capitalism and the environment.

I oppose H 7454 because...

- Fur products are an important part of African-American culture, of which they should not be deprived. ([“A Black Legacy, Wrapped Up in Fur” The New York Times Jan. 31, 2019](#))
- There is no justification to single out fur. If you ban fur, you must ban all animal products.
- Small businesses who sell fur products in Rhode Island have been under constant attack and harassment by certain members of the Rhode Island legislature, with the yearly introduction of legislation like H 7454. The bullying and targeting must stop.
- Rhode Island furriers need protection from proposed legislation like H 7454, the Rhode Island legislature must develop proposals that both protect and promote natural, biodegradable and sustainable materials such as fur.
- Organizations like PETA and HSUS continue to use deceitful "Shock Advocacy" tactics to bully small business owners. Claims made by both organizations against the fur industry and fabricated propaganda have repeatedly been proven false.
- This attack on the retail sale of fur is part of a broader agenda. Speaking to an animal rights conference, HSUS's then-vice president for farm animal issues stated that HSUS's goal is to “get rid of the entire [animal agriculture] industry” and that “we don’t want any of these animals to be raised and killed.” You should not allow natural fur products to be the catalyst of this broader agenda, unless you intend to expand this ban to ALL animal products.
- Consumer choice is one of the key tenets of capitalism, not over/unnecessary regulation.
- The Rhode Island legislature must protect the rights of consumers to create or reject products in a free and fair the marketplace.
- Natural fur is a sustainable renewable resource and biodegradable. Fake fur is not renewable, sustainable, nor biodegradable. Petroleum-based products such as fake fur are NOT a substitute.
- Natural fur is produced ethically and responsibly throughout the entire production process.
- The amount of energy and fossil fuel required for natural fur fabrication is very low when compared to fabrication of synthetic fur.
- The fur trade supports land-based cultures and local indigenous populations contributing to environmental conservation.

- Natural fur is held to ethical global standards like Furmark that ensures the highest animal welfare and sustainability standards.

I urge you use logic and support Constitutional freedoms by voting against H 7454 and continue to allow legal fur fashions and products to be sold in the state of Rhode Island.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak against H 7454. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,
Kay Rhodes
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