



NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS

March 21, 2024

To Chairman Craven and the members of the House Committee on Judiciary

Re: BHA Opposition to RI - 2024 – H7454 –Trade in Animal Fur Products Act

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) seeks to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting, and our members recognize the need to protect our outdoor heritage and wildlife in the few open spaces that remain. We support the North American Wildlife Conservation Model, which asserts that wildlife is held in public trust as a scientifically managed natural resource that can be enjoyed by all.

Although not explicitly stated in H7454, we recognize that this effort is a continuation of prior bills (2021 – H5188, 2022 – H7361, 2023 – H5258) that sought to address concerns with the fur farming industry, which is outside of BHA's area of focus. However, BHA respectfully opposes the passage of H7454 because of the negative affects it would have both on hunters, trappers, and anglers, and on the use and sale of fur obtained through their pursuits.

In Rhode Island, hunting and trapping for wild furbearers is managed by the RI Department of Environmental Management's Division of Fish & Wildlife through regulations that control seasons and bag limits for each species, methods of take, and licensing, checking and reporting requirements. Elsewhere in North America similar fish & wildlife agencies serve an equivalent purpose.

The rules and regulations that guide the take of wildlife follow the best available science, balance the needs of the ecosystem, and manage populations to reduce conflicts between wildlife and people, pets, and property. As written, the bill would unnecessarily ban the sale of products that utilize fur harvested within existing laws and regulations without a valid and substantial reason to do so. Fur products that would be affected should H7454 become law include some which are explicitly named, like clothing garments, and others that are not named or explicitly exempt from the broad prohibitions included in the bill, like common fly-tying materials for fishing.

BHA believes that hunting and trapping for furbearers is a legitimate pursuit that should be facilitated by the State, following the guidance of the North America Model of Wildlife Conservation, and that the regulated sale of fur products obtained through legal hunting and trapping should not be prohibited in Rhode Island. Respectfully, **BHA urges the Committee, and ultimately the General Assembly, to oppose H7454.**

Thank you for your consideration,

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