

Roberta DiMezza

From: Emma Hakansson <emma@collectivefashionjustice.org>
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2025 10:08 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Support for H.5447

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To the Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Emma Hakansson and I am the founding director of charity Collective Fashion Justice, dedicated to a fashion industry protecting people, animals and the planet.

I am writing to express my organisation's support for H.5447 to prohibit the sale of new farmed fur products. I thank the Committee for considering this important and progressive ordinance.

Fashion is often shunned as vapid and unimportant, but fashion is both a powerful form of expression and utterly serious in its impact on the planet and those we share it with.

If an ordinance to prohibit the sale of new fur products was put into place in Rhode Island, the bill would end its inadvertent co-signing of a range of significant harms:

- As much as 95% of all fur comes from animals who spend their short, miserable lives confined to factory-farms. Foxes are commonly kept in wire cages just a square metre small, despite naturally roaming a territory 10,000 times greater. While mink naturally live nearby the water they so love to dive in, those engaged by the fur industry will never fulfil their most basic and natural instinct of swimming. The lives of these animals, as well as raccoon dogs, chinchillas and other confined fur-bearing species, are those of total deprivation.
- The unnatural conditions these animals suffer through mentally break them, shown through common signs of serious psychological distress like hours upon hours of repetitive head nodding and pacing, severe self mutilation and even cannibalism.
- The slaughter of these animals is no better. In SLAY, a documentary film our organisation contributed to, a fur industry CEO refers to what their sector considers 'humane slaughter': for foxes, and I apologise for the confronting nature of this, but really, this is what we're here to discuss the legal acceptability of, this means forcing an electrode into the mouth and anus of the animals, before flicking an 'on-off' switch. For minks, it's death by gassing, taking a whole 15 minutes.

Every single product containing fur is a kind of ghost of this unimaginable suffering. They are what these complex, clever, thinking and feeling individuals are reduced to. A fur trim, a bobble on a beanie, a coat, a key ring.

In my opinion, and in the opinion of the organisation I represent, this should be enough to justify prohibiting fur sales. But the fur industry is also an environmental disaster. Fur trapping is totally indiscriminate, capturing and killing all kinds of native species, including those governments across the US work to protect. Meanwhile, fur factory-farms are major ammonia and phosphorus emissions contributors, and these emissions can lead to eutrophication which can strangle aquatic ecosystems, even creating dead zones.

Once fur has been ‘dressed’ – the industry term equivalent to ‘tanning’ for leather, it is no longer biodegradable, even according to industry studies. In France, advertisements referring to fur as ‘natural’ and ‘eco-friendly’ have been banned, recognised to be ‘strongly misleading’. The carbon equivalent impact of a mink fur coat is nearly 250 kilograms more harmful than even the least sustainable synthetic faux fur, and today we have wholly recycled, even biodegradable and bio-based fur alternatives to take their place. Finally, fur-dressing is so toxic and filled with carcinogenic substances that people who work processing furs face higher risks of acute and chronic conditions: skin complaints, eye irritation, cancer, and in the most egregious cases of poor workplace safety, death. Across numerous countries, fur products, including those sold for children, have been substantially contaminated with hazardous chemicals at levels which breached legal industry standards.

Today, nearly 70% of the most profitable luxury fashion brands have banned fur, and a number of global fashion week events have too. The vast majority of large retailers and high street fashion brands have also banned fur. Numerous countries have banned fur farming, a growing number of councils have banned fur sales. Our organisation has been proud to contribute to the banning of fur at London Fashion Week, Copenhagen Fashion Week and Berlin Fashion Week in the last year.

The proposed bill is in line with a global move towards more responsible, just and sustainable fashion production – and we cannot accept anything less than that.

Thank you very much for your consideration and compassion.

All information and references for this comment are available via our website at <https://www.collectivefashionjustice.org/fur>

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