



Bill: House Bill 5447
Committee: House Judiciary Committee
Position: Favor
Date: March 11, 2025

Support for HB 5447: End Fur Cruelty in Rhode Island

On behalf of Farm Sanctuary, a nonprofit committed to ending cruelty to animals and promoting compassionate living through rescue, education, and advocacy with more than 1.8 million members and supporters, we are proud to submit the following testimony in favor of ending the sale of new farmed fur products.

First, we want to thank the Rhode Island state legislature for taking the time to consider HB 5447 as well as to Representative Patricia Serpa for introducing this critical and popular piece of legislation.

Every year, more than 100 million animals are killed solely for their fur. Approximately 85% of all fur comes from animals whose entire lives are spent caged and confined in factory farms where they suffer physical and mental stress until they are slaughtered.¹ There are no federal laws protecting fur-bearing animals from inhumane slaughter, so many are subject to cruel and excruciating deaths; a horrible end to a life of torment, all in the name of fashion.

The egregious process in which fur is extracted from defenseless animals is reason enough to oppose the production of fur-based materials, but the fur trade poses additional dangers to human and environmental health, many of which cause irreparable damage. Just this year, scientists studying animals farmed for their fur identified 39 viruses classified as “potentially high risk” for transmission to humans, including seven coronavirus species.² The potential transmission of harmful diseases

¹ “Ending the Fur Trade: A Guide to Ending Fur Sales in Your City.” The Humane Society of the United States. <https://www.humanesociety.org/sites/default/files/docs/furfree-hsus-toolkit-0920-digital.pdf>.

² Humane Society International. “Scientists Raise Alarm over Public Health Dangers of the Fur Trade as 39 ‘Potentially High-Risk’ Viruses Identified in Animals on Chinese Fur Farms,” September 5, 2024.



between animals and humans in the fur farming industry is a serious public health concern, putting us at risk of introducing and spreading new diseases amongst human and animal populations.

Fur farming also has a sizable ecological footprint and contributes to environmental degradation in several ways. Fur production requires significant energy consumption, and the confinement of fur-bearing animals to farms for slaughter requires massive amounts of land, water, and food. Animal waste runoff from farms can seep into local waterways and soil, creating lasting ecosystem disruptions and issues for residents in the surrounding areas. Additional pollutants are generated by hazardous toxins in the fur-bleaching and fur-dyeing processes, posing risks to both workers in fur processing plants and consumers that wear fur.

Rhode Island can and must follow the lead of the cities, states, countries, and retailers who have ended fur sales in their communities. Cities across the country such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Ann Arbor, and Cambridge have already passed legislation banning the sale of fur. In 2019, California became the first U.S. state to ban the sale of fur, and other states have followed suit. Fur ban bills have been introduced at the state level in Washington, New York, Connecticut, Oregon, and Hawai'i.³ Globally, Austria, Norway, the United Kingdom, and several other countries have also banned fur farming within their borders to respond to citizen concerns about animal welfare, public health, and environmental degradation.⁴ Over 300 fashion brands have gone "fur-free" in recent years, including top retailers like Gucci, Calvin Klein, and Michael Kors, and several are taking their commitment a step further by endorsing legislation that bans the import of and sale of farmed fur products.⁵ National polling shows that the majority

<https://www.hsi.org/news-resources/scientists-raise-alarm-over-public-health-dangers-of-the-fur-trade-as-39-potentially-high-risk-viruses-identified-in-animals-on-chinese-fur-farms/>.

³ Block, Kitty. "Several States Introduce Bills Banning Fur, Voicing Concerns over Cruelty, Pandemic Risk." The Humane Society of the United States, February 4, 2021.

<https://www.humanesociety.org/blog/several-states-introduce-bills-banning-fur-voicing-concerns-over-cruelty-pandemic-risk>.

⁴ The Humane Society of the United States. "Going Fur-Free."

<https://www.humanesociety.org/all-our-fights/going-fur-free>.

⁵ Four Paws International - Animal Welfare Organisation. "Global Fashion Brands Demand EU-Wide Fur Ban," March 30, 2023.

<https://www.four-paws.org/our-stories/press-releases/march-2023/global-fashion-brands-demand-eu-wide-fur-ban>.



of voters in the U.S. support a federal ban on fur farming, and 71% of Americans are opposed to killing animals for their fur.⁶

Many sustainable, ethical alternatives to fur have already become the norm in fashion. HB 5447 will have a minimal impact on the day-to-day lives of the average shopper in the Ocean State but will be a significant step toward saving millions of animals and protecting our public health, worker safety, and environmental integrity.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Baur", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Gene Baur
CEO and Cofounder, Farm Sanctuary

⁶ Mishler, Jennifer. "Fur Farming: Is It Still Legal in the United States?," March 17, 2023.
<https://sentientmedia.org/fur-farming/>.