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Attn: Representative Craven, Chair, House Judiciary Committee, and Committee Members

Testimony in Opposition to H 5447

An Act Relating to Commercial Law- General Regulatory Provisions- Trade in Animal Fur Products Act
Before the House Judiciary Committee

February 14, 2025

Rhode Island Farm Bureau Federation is an independent, non-governmental grassroots organization made up of farmers and others with agricultural interests. Today our over 1000 RIFB members are not only large farmers and small farmers, but also those engaged in agricultural industries, teachers of agriculture, and consumers.

Ri Farm Bureau opposes **H 5447: An Act Relating to Commercial Law- General Regulatory Provisions - Trade in Animal Fur Products Act**, prohibiting the sale, offer for sale, trade, or distribution of fur products in the state of Rhode Island.

There are no fur farms located in Rhode Island, however there are numerous agricultural endeavors for which fur and hides are a byproduct of the raising of food animals. These byproducts are an important part of the economics of farming and banning the sale of them would affect not only Rhode Island farms, but farms and farm families across the country.

While 2024's similar bill *did* exempt "Cowhide, deerskin, alpaca skin, goatskin or sheepskin with the hair or fleece attached thereto" from the definition of "fur products", the current proposed legislation does not provide exemptions for any of these. We understand that this is likely because these hides do not come from "fur farms", however this legislation is one step closer to the ban of any hides with the hair or fleece attached.

Over the past five years, this legislation has wavered between exempting hides with the hair attached, to removing the phrasing "**Cowhide with the hair attached thereto**", from **exempted items**. Rhode Island Farm Bureau continues to have concerns that this legislation could be extended to ban any pelts/hides with the hair attached which are not raised on "fur farms". It is foreseeable that this legislation could be construed to cover these food animals for which the sale of their pelts, a byproduct of their raising, is additional income for the farms, many struggling to produce enough income to stay in agriculture.

Rabbit skins with fur, cattle hides with hair, and sheep and goat skins with hair and fleece attached are all byproducts of RI farms, and a deer farm is being considered in the state. These farms would lose valuable income if unable to sell their hides with the fur or hair attached. The 2021 removal of "cowhide with the hair attached" in H 5188 since this legislation was first proposed reminds us how simple it would be to have any of these locally raised hides removed as well if this bill were to pass.

RI Farm Bureau opposes **H 5447** and asks that the committee not support the **Trade in Animal Fur Products Act**.

Henry B. Wright III
President, RI Farm Bureau