



## Testimony for Committee Hearing on House Bill 5447

Representative Robert E. Craven, Sr.  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Chair Robert Craven,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today regarding HB 5447, which seeks to prohibit activities related to the production and manufacturing of farmed fur products in Rhode Island. As a representative of the Natural Fibers Alliance, a coalition dedicated to promoting natural, sustainable materials in fashion, I stand opposed to this bill for several reasons.

Firstly, it is important to recognize that the fur industry is one of the most highly regulated sectors, both in the U.S. and globally. Farmed fur undergoes rigorous peer-reviewed certification processes to ensure ethical practices and sustainability, providing consumers with confidence in their purchases. The vast majority of mink pelts produced in the U.S. come from farms that are members of the Fur Commission USA and participate in our Merit Award program, which involves independent veterinarians to ensure compliance with humane standards.

Additionally, wild fur in North America is governed by a comprehensive system of laws, regulations, and controls designed to emphasize the sustainability and welfare of all fur-bearing species while protecting endangered species. This system, which operates at local, state, regional, and international levels, is complex and reflects the need to address multiple agencies, species, environments, and national borders.

Over the past four legislative sessions, unfounded claims regarding inhumane treatment of animals have been cited to support fur bans, yet these claims have been consistently disproven. The fur industry adheres to rigorous standards that guarantee humane treatment and welfare for the animals involved. Rather than allowing the market to dictate the demand for legally sourced materials, HB 5447 restricts consumer choice.

There is a notable cultural shift, particularly among women in the U.S., who are increasingly embracing fur. Recent articles in the New York Times highlight the resurgence of fur coats, reaffirming their status as a trendy and luxurious option (“Fur is Back in Fashion”—New York Times). Coverage from the Wall Street Journal also discusses changing perceptions of fur in fashion (“The Return of Fur”—Wall Street Journal). Platforms like Instagram showcase fur on fashion runways, further indicating active consumer interest.

Furthermore, recent public sentiment regarding fur is evidenced by the results of the Denver ballot initiative. In November 2024, Denver residents voted against a proposed fur ban, with approximately 58% in favor of keeping fur sales legal. This outcome reflects a strong desire for individual freedom and choice, as many voters recognized that such a ban would also affect traditional items made from fur. For more details, refer to the Denver Post article discussing the defeat of the fur ban (“Denver Voters Reject Fur Ban”—Denver Post).

Moreover, activists are now reconsidering their stance on faux fur, acknowledging research that indicates it can have a greater environmental impact than natural fibers. A study published in Environmental Science & Technology found that “the manufacturing of synthetic fibers, including polyester-based faux fur, results in significant greenhouse gas emissions, and the microplastics released during their lifecycle contribute to ocean pollution” (Plastics in the Environment: A Review, Environmental Science & Technology, 2022). Another article in The Guardian highlights that “vegan leather, while marketed as an eco-friendly alternative, may lead to greater environmental harm due to its petroleum-based components and high energy consumption during production” (“The Truth Behind Vegan Leather”—The

Guardian). In contrast, natural fibers, including fur, are biodegradable and do not contribute to plastic waste.

Unfortunately, this legislation continues to be introduced annually. It is time to celebrate natural fibers rather than condemn them. Implementing this ban could have far-reaching consequences, potentially impacting poultry and cattle farmers as well. Increased scrutiny on animal products may lead to further restrictions on other natural materials, threatening the livelihoods of farmers across various sectors.

In conclusion, while the bill claims that eliminating the sale of farmed fur products will enhance animal welfare and reduce public health risks, it is important to note that there are no fur farms in Rhode Island. This legislation imposes unnecessary restrictions that do not reflect the interests of the community. The existing regulations in the fur industry already ensure humane practices, and the focus on this issue distracts from more pressing matters facing public goods and services. Rhode Island voters deserve practical solutions that support the agricultural economy and respect consumer choice, rather than policies that limit choice and undermine local livelihoods.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Mike Brown,  
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