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March 3, 2025

Representative Robert E. Craven, Chair  
Representative Carol Hagan McEntee, First Vice Chair  
Representative Jason Knight, Second Vice Chair  
House Judiciary Committee  
Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

**Re: Support for HB 5447 to ban the sale of certain new farmed-fur products in Rhode Island, reducing the demand driving the factory farming fur industry**

Chair Craven, Vice Chairs Hagan and Knight, and Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Animal Legal Defense Fund and our supporters in Rhode Island, thank you for this opportunity to support for *An Act Relating To Commercial Law -- General Regulatory Provisions -- Trade In Farmed Animal Fur Products* (HB 5447/SB 25), sponsored by Representatives Serpa, Edwards, O'Brien, Baginski, Solomon, Kazarian, and Lima. This legislation would prohibit the sale of certain new farmed animal fur products and make violations punishable as a civil offense.

The Animal Legal Defense Fund is the nation's preeminent legal advocacy organization for animals. Our mission is to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. We advocate for stronger legal protections for animals from cruelty, including animals used in the fur trade.

We thank the sponsors for introducing this important animal protection legislation and appreciate the General Assembly for your ongoing commitment to animal protection. In the Animal Legal Defense Fund 2024 annual year-end report, Rhode Island ranked in the top tier among all states for its strong animal protection laws ([aldf.org/staterankings](https://aldf.org/staterankings)). The ranking report considers the animal cruelty laws of all fifty states based on twenty different categories of animal protection.

**We strongly support this legislation to prohibit the sale, offer for sale, trade, or distribution of new farmed animal fur products, including clothing, fashion accessories—like slippers, ear muffs, gloves, and keychains—and home décor items.** This legislation would not impact the sale of used fur products, such as those that are second-hand or vintage, nor the sale of fur products where expressly authorized by federal law.

Legislation to ban the sale of new farmed-fur products reduces the demand driving the fur factory farming industry, which requires animal cruelty and puts our environment at risk at a time when alternatives exist and fur-free policies are on the rise. **It ensures Rhode Island does not play a role in facilitating this cruelty.**

**All our clients are innocent**

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### **Fur requires significant animal cruelty.**

Millions of animals, including foxes, wolves, minks, and rabbits, are brutally killed every year so people can wear their fur. Bred to die on fur farms, animals exploited by the fur factory farming industry endure tremendous suffering. On these farms, wild animals are typically confined to tiny wire cages for their entire lives. Often, these cages are outdoors—stacked in wooden sheds that provide no protection from the heat or cold. Unable to engage in any of their natural behaviors, these animals routinely resort to self-mutilation, obsessive pacing, and infanticide. Fur farms usually kill animals through gassing, electrocution, neck-breaking, and poisoning. Undercover investigations on fur farms have documented egregious cruelty—including animals being skinned alive.

### **Fur puts our environment at risk.**

The fur industry also poses serious environmental threats. On fur factory farms, waste runoff from animals pollutes the soil and waterways. The tanning and dying process uses toxic and carcinogenic chemicals, like chromium and formaldehyde, to prevent the skin from decaying.

Studies have found that among synthetic and natural textiles, fur is the worst-offending in 17-of-18 environmental categories considered. The studies also found that the climate change impact of mink fur is five times higher than the second worst-offending textile (wool) and six times higher than a faux-fur alternative. This is largely due to the feed, land use, toxicity, and manure of the fur farming industry.

Fortunately, innovative technology has produced an array of alternatives with the same warmth, look and feel as fur—without the cruelty or environmental concerns.

### **Fur alternatives exist.**

There is no justification to continue to farm animals for their fur considering the availability of alternatives including faux fur. Technology allows faux fur to be virtually indistinguishable from animal fur—so indistinguishable that, in 2017, that a Baltimore furrier was under consideration for investigation for false advertising when they used an image of a faux fur jacket from the HBO series *Game of Thrones* to advertise the animal furs in their store.

### **Fur-free policies are on the rise.**

Consumers' concern for the animal cruelty and environmental threats from fur is leading fashion brands and legislators away from animal fur.

Hundreds of retailers, brands, and designers at all price points have announced fur-free policies, including: Macy's, Bloomingdale's, Gucci, Prada, Chanel, Coach, Burberry, Versace, Michael Kors, Armani, Calvin Klein, Kenneth Cole, Ralph Lauren, and JCPenney.

In 2019, California became the first state in the nation to ban the sale of fur after four of its communities adopted fur sales bans: West Hollywood (2013), Berkeley (2017), as well as San Francisco and Los Angeles (2018). Municipalities in Florida, Michigan, and Massachusetts have followed suit—in nearby Massachusetts, fur sales bans have been adopted in Wellesley (2020), Weston and Brookline (2021), Plymouth and Cambridge (2022), Lexington (2023), as well as Arlington and Attleboro (2024). Abroad, about two dozen countries are in the process of or have already banned fur farming, including the UK, France, and Norway.

**It's time for Rhode Island to go fur-free.**

Known as a leader in animal protection, Rhode Island has the opportunity to help prevent the animal suffering and environmental degradation inherent to the fur farming industry.

By passing this legislation, Rhode Island will lead the fur-free charge while reinforcing the shift to alternatives products that is occurring in the fashion industry. Rhode Island should seize this opportunity to more closely align the state's laws with its values. Please help advance this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

**Stephanie J. Harris**

Senior Legislative Affairs Manager

Animal Legal Defense Fund

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