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Dear Chairman Deen,

Please allow me to briefly introduce myself and address the global ivory and rhino horn issues with strong support for (H297). I am a faculty member at the University of Vermont in the Animal Science Department where I lead the Zoos and Exotics Concentration of study. My undergraduate degree (BS,Animal Science) and my veterinary degree (DVM) are from Cornell University.

In central Africa, the regional elephant population has declined by 64 percent in the last decade, a finding of new study, published in the August 19, 2014 issue of *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, led by George Wittemyer of Colorado State University .

Population estimates in central Africa have concluded that three-quarters of local elephant populations are declining. Within the next five years, elephants in the wild could be extinct.

During 2012, 668 rhinos were killed in South Africa alone. That's one every 13 hours. Over the past six years, rhino poaching has increased by a staggering and unprecedented amount and is mainly attributed to the growing demand for rhino horn from Vietnam.

Anecdotally, as a UVM faculty member who spent my last sabbatical in Tanzania in 2008 I can attest that the culture surrounding this issue feels much more like an industrialized terrorist war than a conservation issue. Game protectors on the front lines of this war walk into the bush and put their lives at risk daily. Game wardens are routinely shot and killed and all for the price of elephant tusks and rhino horn.

The demand for ivory, and rhino horn, most notably in Asia, has kept black market prices high worldwide. This, is a very complex global issue.

Wittemyer and his team are counting on grass roots movements informed by this new statistical information to move this discussion beyond anecdotes. Firstly, we must understand that we are all responsible. And therefore, in that understanding realize that each piece of ivory and horn must be destroyed. Ivory and Rhino horn must not be valued in today's world in order for these species to go with us into the next millennium and not say goodbye to us in this decade.

Time is of the essence for us to be able to stem the tide of the unrestricted slaughter and subsequent extinction of species. Most important, is understanding the connection between this slaughter and our policies here in the USA, and the connection to terrorist activity.

Currently, one elephant every 15 minutes dies at the hands of poachers. And the slaughter is dirty; AK-47's cyanide, and the toxic drug M-99. Many elephants and rhinos are simply sedated (this is cheaper) while their tusks and horns are brutally hacked from their skulls. Sadly, the animals are completely aware when this is being done.

The issue includes "antique ivory". Many people are not aware that almost 90% of the "antique ivory" in the marketplace is actually new ivory

that has been “aged”.

The nearly 2 billion dollar ivory industry supports global crime syndicates and military groups. Politically corrupt groups across Africa continue to use the ivory and rhino horn black markets as a funding source for military resistance groups such Boko Haram. Simply, buying ivory puts money into the hands of the most corrupt groups in the world.

This proposed ban is good for everyone, and moving this important legislation forward is another way that Vermont can lead the nation. We have excellent examples to help us understand that the feared financial repercussions are non-existent. (New York and New Jersey have led the way and Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oregon, Rhode Island have proposed bills)

Currently, the rest of the USA is watching Vermont, and of course China and Viet Nam are watching the USA. We need to stand with New York and New Jersey and lead the way globally.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Fobare-Erickson, DVM". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patricia Fobare-Erickson, DVM

