

Dear Chairman and Committee members,

My name is Taegen Yardley and I am passionate about saving the elephants!

I first became passionate in 2013 when I helped with a bake sale at the screening of the documentary “Battle for the Elephants” at UVM. This movie had an enormous impact on me and made me want to act in their defense. I have spent a lot of time educating myself on the major conservation and humanitarian reasons as to why it is so important to keep elephants on this planet. In April of 2015, I testified here, at the Vermont State House, in support of Bill H.297. After my testimony I participated in a Skype session with students in Hong Kong who have been working to ban ivory sales there. We shared ideas about what to do to ban the sale of ivory in our countries. After our call, I was inspired to initiate the “Global March for Elephants and Rhinos”, which took place in Burlington on October 4th. The march was much more successful than anyone could have imagined. Over 325 children and adults from all over Vermont joined us to march, as one voice, in solidarity with the thousands of others who marched in the over 150 marches, which were held around the world on the same day. After the march, I wanted to keep the momentum going. With support from many students and one amazing teacher, Mark Cline-Lucey at Vermont Commons School, I was able to produce a movie called “Kids Battle for a World with Elephants”. This movie has been viewed around the world, over 80,000 times and has just been translated into Mandarin so that it can be seen and understood by even more people around the world. I am so happy that our film has become an inspiration to people across the globe. I never dreamed that it would reach some of the people it has reached. It has been viewed and shared on social media by...

- The Ambassador to Gabon
- The Chief of U.S. Fish and Wildlife for Africa and Asia
- Senator Ray Lesniak of New Jersey
- Bryan Christie – Mr. Christie is Chief Correspondent and founder of the Special Investigations Unit at National Geographic
- Actor, Kristin Davis
- John Hemminway – Mr. Hemminway is a writer and screenwriter and works with National Geographic. He produced “Battle for the Elephants” which is the reason I am here today.
- Gary Knell - President of National Geographic. Mr Knell has put me in touch with the Education Department at Nat Geo and they have highlighted our story and my effort on their blog.
- The founders of One More Generation and The Perfect World Foundation which are non-profit organizations dedicated to the preservation of endangered species. They have been highlighting our efforts via social media and have been bringing attention to our movie.

Because of this film, I was invited by the Executive Director of the Jackson Hole International Wildlife Film Festival to attend World Wildlife Day celebratory events at the Department of State in DC and at the UN in NYC three weeks ago. While I was there I met journalists, movie producers, conservationists, Hollywood actors and many government officials. It was wonderful to be amongst so many people all fighting for the same cause. I was told by Assistant Attorney General of Environment and National Resources, John Cruden and Undersecretary of State for Economic Growth Energy and the Environment, Katharine Novelli, that they would support our movie being shown in several embassies. So many people understand the importance of conservation of our world’s wildlife. If you have not yet seen my movie, I will share the link with you today. I hope that you will take the time to view it and it is my hope that by highlighting both the conservation and humanitarian reasons as to why banning the sale of ivory is so important, that you will be convinced to ban the sale of ivory in Vermont.

Federal laws cannot stop ivory from being sold within state borders. Over 25 states currently have legislation in progress, to ban the sale of ivory. New Jersey, New York, California and Washington have already implemented state bans. New Jersey was the first state in our country to pass a clean bill without exemptions. The current v

version of Vermont's Bill would be the weakest Bill in the country. Mary Louise Smith, proud owner of a 1925 Steinway Grand Piano says "In this sometimes splintering world, THINKING humans, must recognize these treasures and protect them. Vermont must stand with New Jersey and pass Bill H.297 without exceptions. Please do so, without delay."

I am asking you to please strengthen our Bill and help stop the slaughter of these gentle giants.

Thank you for listening today. I would like to close with a quote from a letter I received from Gary Knell, President of National Geographic. "Your work and messaging should make a big impact in Montpelier to make the difference we all wish to see." I hope he is right.