



Statement of
Jo-Anne Basile, Executive Director
Connecticut Votes for Animals
Before the Environment Committee
March 6, 2020

Support for HB 5341, An Act Prohibiting the Sale and Breeding of Certain Cetaceans

The Honorable Co-Chair Christine Cohen and Co-Chair Mike Demicco, Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee

CT Votes for Animals is a grass roots animal advocacy organization representing over 5,000 citizens across the State of Connecticut. CVA members care deeply that Connecticut provides a safe and humane environment for all its animals. CVA speaks up for animals as a reminder to the public that a compassionate world is good for all and one in which we should all want to live.

CVA supports HB 5341, An Act Prohibiting the Sale and Breeding of Certain Cetaceans. As drafted the bill would put Connecticut in the forefront of marine life conservation. Even though there is unresolved controversy it is our understanding that the bill will grandfather the current Beluga Whale research program at Mystic Aquarium. It bears emphasizing that the future of Mystic's expanded project lies not in this bill but with the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration who must approve or deny the request to import the additional 5 Belugas.

CVA strongly supports the principles contained in HB 5341. We believe it is not in the best interest of marine mammals to live in captivity. Whales, dolphins and porpoises are highly intelligent, social animals and are genetically built to live in open waters and not in tanks. It is well documented that whales will have a shorter life span and that these highly intelligent animals are less likely to thrive in captivity.

Mystic Aquarium has a well-deserved reputation as a highly regarded marine life research institution. We believe the advocates for cetaceans and Mystic both are dedicated to the well-being of these animals. It is our hope that a compromise can be struck that would best serve the interests of Mystic's research program and Connecticut's policies to protect cetaceans.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views in support of HB 5341.

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