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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS**

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Wednesday, February 17, 2021
2:00 p.m.
Via Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
H.B. 32, RELATING TO ANIMAL FUR PRODUCTS**

Chair Nakashima and Members of the Committee:

My name is Catherine Awakuni Colón, and I am the Director of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA or Department). The Department appreciates the intent of this bill and offers comments.

The purpose of this bill is to prohibit the manufacture for sale, offer for sale, display for sale, sale, trade, or distribution of certain animal fur products in the State. The measure requires the DCCA director to: issue a warning notice to a person who violates the proposed statutory chapter; impose fines for violations; and adopt rules to carry out the regulation of animal fur products.

The Department appreciates the bill's intent to eliminate fur farming and the manufacture, sale, and distribution of fur products in Hawaii to foster a more humane environment. However, the regulation of animal fur products would require oversight by a department or an agency well-versed in matters involving fur farming, fur trade industries, and animal rights. These matters are outside the jurisdiction of the DCCA, which protects consumers through business registration and professional licensure,

Testimony of DCCA

H.B. 32

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monitoring the financial solvency of local financial institutions and insurance companies, and investigating complaints of unfair business practices and license violations. Given the tailored mission of the DCCA—to protect consumers and service its business community with respect and fairness to the interests of both—it would be difficult to use existing staff expertise to regulate the manufacture, sale, and distribution of animal fur products in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

HB-32

Submitted on: 2/17/2021 4:44:23 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/17/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
PJ Smith	THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES	Support	No

Comments:

Thank you, Chair, Vice Chair and committee members. My name is PJ Smith, and I'm the Director of Fashion Policy for the Humane Society of the United States.

For over a decade, I've worked with dozens of the top apparel companies – including Nordstrom, Bloomingdale's, Gucci and Prada – to create fur-free policies that are good for animals and the environment. Consumers understand there is no way to humanely source fur and companies are responding by ending fur sales. But last year has shined a new light on the fur trade and its risk to public health.

Fur farmed mink are the only species known to transmit the coronavirus to humans. Last year, outbreaks occurred on over 400 fur farms in 11 countries – including the U.S. in Oregon, Utah, Wisconsin and Michigan. The virus is mutating on these farms and the mink variant has now been found in humans around the globe and among wild mink in Utah and Oregon. Due to this risk, 20 million mink were killed, Sweden and Denmark have suspended production, France and the Netherlands announced the end of mink farming.

Just today the World Health Organization released a report saying the overall risk of introduction and spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the virus that causes COVID-19, from the fur-farming system to humans and to susceptible wildlife populations is considered high.

Luckily, awareness and innovative alternatives like Stella McCartney's new biodegradable corn-based faux fur are just as warm and stylish and better for the environment. California banned fur sales in 2019, and this year, Oregon, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York and Connecticut will be joining Hawaii by introducing fur sales bans of their own.

Consumers care about animal welfare, the environment and innovation more than ever. With the passage of HB 32, Hawaii will solidify its position as one of the nation's most humane states and signal to the rest of the world that it will not contribute to this cruelty or risk to public health.

We hope you'll vote yes for this important bill. Thank you.

HB-32

Submitted on: 2/17/2021 4:47:24 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/17/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kekoa McClellan	The Humane Society of the United States	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Representative Nakashima, Vice Chair Matayoshi, and Honorable Members of the House Committee on Judiciary on Hawaiian Affairs,

Please accept this communication as testimony in strong support of HB32, Relating to Animal Fur Products.

This measure, banning the sale of fur products in Hawaii, comports with our Islands' sensibilities about the pono treatment of animals and our awareness over the epidemiological threat to mankind caused by the fur trade.

One of the most startling facts to come out of the global pandemic has been the role played by fur farms in the rapid spread and mutation of the COVID-19 Coronavirus - SARS-CoV-2. Specifically, mink farms (the mongoose found in Hawaii is a mink species) and their role in accelerating the infection's spread and its variants. Millions of mink across the globe are being 'culled' for this very reason, and whole countries have embarked on nationwide fur-farm bans to reduce the epidemiological risks to mankind posed by the cruel fur trade.

It is worth noting that this bill will not cause financial harm to local retailers, nor result in the loss of a single local job. In all of 2019, at Hawaii's peak visitorship, we imported a mere \$38,588.00 worth of furskin apparel for sale across the entire State. Disallowing the sale of these products will have effectively zero impact on retail or tax revenues. In fact, most of Hawaii's retailers by volume are already wholly Fur free.

However, this bill will have a tremendous impact in signaling our State's support for the humane treatment of animals and our affirmative positioning in promoting best practices abroad that have real and tangible epidemiological, social, political and economic impacts on our island home.

Mahalo for your time and support for this measure.

Me ka pono,

Kekoa McClellan, The McClellan Group



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

To: Representative Mark Nakashima, Chair
Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Date: February 17, 2021

Re: Support HB 32, Relating to Animal Fur Products

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Matayoshi, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lindsay Vierheilig and I am the Hawaii State Director for the Humane Society of the United States. I'd like to reinforce our strong support for House Bill 32.

As the Hawaii State Director, it is my honor to work with Hawaii's legislators and the community to find ways to fight against animal cruelty here and elsewhere. Unfortunately, there is simply no way to humanely produce fur. Every year, over 100 million animals, including chinchillas, foxes, mink, coyotes and racoon dogs are killed for their fur. Eighty-five percent of all fur comes from fur factory farms, where undomesticated animals spend their entire lives in cramped cages, deprived of the ability to engage in natural behaviors. Living in these conditions causes enormous stress, which can lead to self-mutilation and other issues. These animals are then killed by neck-breaking, crude gassing or anal-electrocution. Fur producers have even been documented skinning animals alive. In the wild, animals are caught in cruel leghold traps, where they often languish for days without food or water.

The concern for animal welfare continues to grow in Hawaii and across the States, and consumers increasingly want products that do not involve animal cruelty. My colleague PJ has already touched on the numerous brands that are following suit.

The fur industry also causes major environmental pollution. Not only does the tanning and dyeing process use toxic chemicals like formaldehyde and chromium to prevent skin decay, but the runoff from animals on factory farms pollutes waterways and soil.

Hawaii now has a chance to take an affirmative stand against the cruel practices and environmental harm inherent in the fur industry, as well as the COVID-19 related public health risk that my colleague has/will discussed. For all of these reasons, we respectfully ask that the members of the committee support the passage of HB 32.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Vierheilig
Hawaii State Director
The Humane Society of the United States
808-462-3561