November 3, 2025

Senator Rebecca Rausch, Chair
Senator Dylan A. Fernandes, Vice Chair

Representative Christine P. Barber, Chair
Representative Simon Cataldo, Vice Chair

Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Massachusetts State House
Boston, MA 02133

Support: S.551 and H.990, An Act prohibiting the sale of newly farmed fur products

Dear Chair Rausch, Chair Barber, Vice Chair Fernandes, Vice Chair Cataldo and Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and our supporters throughout Massachusetts, we submit these comments in strong support of S. 551, filed by Senate Majority Leader Cynthia Creem, and H. 990, filed by Representative Jack Patrick Lewis.

This legislation would prohibit the sale of new fur products in the Commonwealth, including clothing, accessories, and home décor. Unlike similar bills filed in prior sessions, the legislation before you this session is substantially narrower and more precisely targeted. It focuses only the sale of new fur products made from animals confined in fur factory farms. The sale of fur products from hunted and trapped animals would not be affected.

S. 551/H. 990 include sensible exemptions to ensure it targets only products derived from the most inhumane practices. The sale of used fur products remains lawful, as do fur products used for religious purposes and those from domesticated species typically raised for food production, such as cowhide, shearling, and wool. Products made with animal hair (not hair attached to skin) —such as felt hats, paint brushes, fishing lures and eyelash extensions—are outside the definition of "fur product." However, if the Committee would prefer, we support adding an explicit amendment for "fishing lures and fur pieces or parts intended to make fishing lures," language developed in collaboration with New England outdoor recreation groups (see Appendix A).

Ending the sale of new fur products would ensure Massachusetts no longer supports the global fur farming industry. Nearly all new fur products sold in the U.S. come from mink and other fur-bearing wildlife held captive in overseas fur factory farms. Annually, tens of millions of foxes, mink and raccoon dogs are killed in fur farms where they spend their entire lives in cramped, wire-floored cages, deprived of the ability to engage in natural behaviors like swimming, digging, and running. The European Union's Food Safety Authority recently published an extensive scientific opinion on animal welfare in the fur farming industry. It concluded that it is not possible to ensure basic animal welfare or mitigate the

serious welfare concerns in the cage-based systems on fur farms, finding systemic suffering across all species.[i]

Since animals held in fur farms are not raised for consumption, the industry is typically not subject to animal welfare or humane slaughter laws, either in the U.S. or overseas. Most fur products come from China, where investigations have documented animals being skinned alive while conscious.[ii] Even in the U.S., where the fur industry is relatively small,[iii] there are *no* federal regulations ensuring animal welfare or humane slaughter on fur farms. The living conditions on these farms often drive animals to self-mutilate, pace obsessively, and display other clear signs of distress and suffering.[iv]

Investigations around the world, including a recent rescue of hundreds of animals from an Ohio fur farm,[v] have revealed horrific conditions and neglect—animals found with open and infected wounds, others left dead and decaying in cages beside living animals, and even instances of cannibalism. Fur-farmed animals are killed using brutal methods designed to preserve pelts and keep costs low. Industry-approved methods, such as anal and vaginal electrocution, bludgeoning and gassing without prior sedation, fall far short of the humane euthanasia standards set by the American Veterinary Medical Association for furbearing animals.[vi] The use of carbon monoxide gas to kill mink is especially cruel, as these semi-aquatic animals can hold their breath for long periods, prolonging their suffering.[vii] When these methods fail, animals may be skinned while still alive.

Ending the sale of new fur products also benefits public health. The tanning and dyeing of fur require toxic, carcinogenic chemicals such as formaldehyde to prevent the skins from decaying.[viii] The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has previously fined six fur processing plants for causing high levels of pollution and for using solvents in fur dressing that "may cause respiratory problems, and are listed as possible carcinogens."[ix] These chemicals can leach into waterways, posing a broad risk to public health. In fact, fur products can contain such high levels of toxic substances and carcinogenic chemicals that, in 2016, the Italian Ministry of Health ordered the withdrawal of certain children's fur clothing from the market after they exceeded safety standards and were deemed "dangerous products."[x]

Confining wild animals in close, unsanitary quarters with no infectious disease monitoring also poses a serious biosecurity threat. Mink on hundreds of fur factory farms in 12 countries across Europe and North America—including four U.S. states—have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. Mink fur farms act as mutation hubs, allowing the virus to mutate and spread to humans. Wild mink near these farms have also been infected with the same variant found in farmed mink. Farmed foxes and raccoon dogs have also contracted SARS coronavirus, capable of transmission to wild populations. In wildlife markets in China, both foxes and raccoon dogs have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2.

Fur-farmed mink, foxes, and raccoon dogs have also tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), raising similar concerns about the potential transmission to humans.[xi] Within fur farms, disease can spread through novel mammal-to-mammal transmission. Researchers have characterized fur farms as "the perfect petri dish for a future pandemic" in reference to HPAI.[xii] In Finland, the public health threat of HPAI has led to the culling of hundreds of thousands of fur-farmed animals. Moreover, HPAI is now spreading throughout U.S. commercial poultry and dairy cow populations, warranting increasing concern about its potential presence in U.S. fur farms.

Ending the sale of new fur products is also beneficial for the environment. Per kilogram, the fur industry has the largest negative environmental impact of any material used in fashion, measured in greenhouse gas emissions, waste runoff, and toxicity.[xiii] The water consumption for fur production is extraordinarily high —104 times greater than for acrylic, 91 times greater than polyester, and five times greater than cotton. The climate change impact of mink fur is at least six times greater than that of faux fur.

An economic analysis published just weeks ago estimated that fur production in Europe has an environmental cost of roughly €226 million (~ $260 million) annually in harms from pollution, resource depletion, local disamenity, and invasive alien species.[xiv] The industry's heavy emissions have been linked to chronic respiratory diseases and premature deaths across Europe. Consequently, advertising standards committees in France, the UK, Denmark, Holland, Finland, and Italy have ruled that claims portraying fur as environmentally friendly are "false and misleading."[xv] In 2018, France's advertising authority stated, "Numerous reliable reports show that the production of fur is extremely cruel and polluting, and that the final product contains toxic substances."[xvi]

Ending the sale of new fur products in Massachusetts aligns with the growing national and international momentum recognizing its inherent cruelty and environmental harm of the fur industry. A 2025 survey by Colorado State University's Animal Human Policy Center of public perspectives on fur products found that two-thirds of Massachusetts voters support prohibiting the sale of fur products from animals raised in fur factory farms.[xvii]

In Massachusetts, six municipalities—Brookline, Cambridge, Lexington, Plymouth, Wellesley, and Weston—have already enacted bans on the sale of new fur products. The entire state of California has also banned these products, as have countries such as Israel, while other countries have passed bans or restrictions on fur factory farming altogether. Meanwhile, most fashion brands and retailers have gone fur-free in response to growing consumer demand for humane and sustainable alternatives. Legislation to end the sale of new fur products in Massachusetts will strengthen this movement and reflect the clear values of our residents[xviii]

The economic impact of S. 551/H. 990 would be minimal. Only a handful of retailers in the state still sell new fur items, and even among those, fur typically represents less than 2% of total sales, according to federal economic census data.[xix] Most of these seasonal products, such as fur-pom hats or fur-trimmed gloves, can easily be replaced with cruelty-free alternatives. In jurisdictions that have enacted similar bans, fur retailers remain in business. They continue to provide fur cleaning, repair, and storage services, sell used fur products, and transition to faux and bio-based alternatives.

For these ethical, public health, and environmental reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to issue favorable reports on S. 551 and H. 990. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Preyel Patel
Massachusetts State Director
Humane World for Animals

Stephanie Harris
Senior Legislative Affairs Manager
Animal Legal Defense Fund

Kara Holmquist
Director of Advocacy
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Allison Blanck
Director of Advocacy
Animal Rescue League of Boston

Melanie Lary
Research and Campaigns Manager
FOUR PAWS USA

Liz Cabrera Holtz
Senior Campaign Manager
World Animal Protection US

Devan Schowe (She/Her)
Campaigns Associate
Born Free USA

Zack Strong
Senior Attorney and Director Farmed Animal Program
Animal Welfare Institute

Hannah Connor
Environmental Health Deputy Director and Senior Attorney
Center for Biological Diversity

Drew McCormick
Public Policy Specialist
Animal Defenders International

Appendix A:

SECTION 1. The General Laws are hereby amended by inserting after chapter 110H the following chapter:-

CHAPTER 110I.

SALE OF FARMED FUR PRODUCTS.

Section 1. The general court finds that eliminating the sale of farmed fur products in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will decrease demand for cruel products, reduce public health risks, promote community awareness of animal welfare, foster a more humane environment, and enhance the reputation of the Commonwealth.

Section 2. For purposes of this chapter, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

"Fur," any animal skin or part thereof with hair, fleece, or fur fibers attached thereto, either in its raw or processed state.

"Fur product," any article of clothing or covering for any part of the body, or any fashion accessory, including but not limited to handbags, shoes, slippers, hats, earmuffs, scarves, shawls, gloves, jewelry, keychains, toys or trinkets, and home accessories and décor, that is made in whole or part of fur. "Fur product" shall not include any of the following:

(1) An animal skin or part thereof that is to be converted into leather, or which in processing will have the hair, fleece, or fur fiber completely removed; or

~~(2) Animal hair, fleece, or fur fibers that are not attached to skin (e.g., fishing lures); or~~

(2) Fur, wool, or other fibers sourced exclusively from any member of the family Bovidae, Camelidae, Equidae, Suidae, or Cervidae.

"Fur farm," any operation, including the land, buildings, support facilities, and any other

location or equipment, in which animals – including but not limited to, mink, fox, raccoon dog or chinchilla – are owned, controlled, raised, bred, propagated, or kept for the value of their fur.

"Person," any individual, firm, partnership, joint venture, association, limited liability company, corporation, estate, trust, receiver, or syndicate.

"Ultimate consumer," an individual who buys a fur product for their own use, or for the use of another, but not for resale or trade.

"Used fur product," a fur product that has been worn or used by an ultimate consumer.

Section 3. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a person shall not sell, offer for sale, display for sale, trade, or otherwise distribute for monetary or nonmonetary consideration, a fur product in Massachusetts if any of the fur contained in the fur product was sourced from an animal that was raised, maintained, kept, or housed for all or part of its life on a fur farm.

(b) For purposes of this section, the sale of a fur product occurs in Massachusetts if:

(1) The buyer takes physical possession of the fur product in Massachusetts; or,

(2) The seller is located in Massachusetts.

Section 4. The prohibitions in section 3 shall not apply to the sale, offer for sale, display for sale, trade, or distribution of:

(1) A used fur product;

(2) A fur product used for religious purposes;

(3) Fishing lures and fur pieces or parts intended to make fishing lures; or

(4) A fur product where the activity is expressly authorized by federal law.

Section 5. (a) The attorney general shall enforce this chapter. The attorney general may also seek injunctive relief to prevent further violations of this chapter.

(b) Within 6 months of the passage of this act, the attorney general shall promulgate rules and regulations for the implementation and enforcement of this chapter.

(c) A person who violates this chapter shall be liable for a civil penalty of not less than five hundred dollars nor more than five thousand dollars per violation. Each fur product that constitutes a violation of this chapter shall be treated as a separate violation.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect 1 year after passage.

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[i] Humane World for Animals. 2025. EU science body, EFSA, declares systemic animal suffering on Europe's fur farms. Retrieved from https://www.humaneworld.org/en/news/eu-science-body-efsa-declares-systemic-animal-suffering-europes-fur-farms.

[ii] Faunalytics, 2013. Dying For Fur: A Report On The Fur Industry In China. Retrieved from https://faunalytics.org/dying-for-fur-a-report-on-the-fur-industry-in-china/#.

[iii] Voluntary surveys by the USDA suggest there are likely fewer than 100 mink fur farms remaining in the U.S., and the industry has plummeted in the last decade. Tracking of fox fur farms in the U.S. is nonexistent. USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Mink (July 2023). Retrieved from https://usda.library.cornell.edu/concern/publications/2227mp65f.

[iv] E.g., Pickett, H. and Harris, S. 2025. The Case Against Fur Factory Farming: A Scientific Review of Animal Welfare Standards and Welfur, Respect for Animals. Retrieved from https://www.furfreealliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Case-against-fur-farming.pdf

[v] Humane World for Animals. 2025. Coyotes, foxes among hundreds of animals saved from fur and urine farm in Ohio. Retrieved from https://www.humanesociety.org/blog/animals-rescued-fur-urine-farm-ohio.

[vi] The AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals advise that "methods [of euthanasia] based on hypoxia will not be appropriate for species that are tolerant of prolonged periods of hypoxemia," (p. 16). American Veterinary Medical Association, AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2020 Edition (2020). Retrieved from https://www.avma.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/2020-Euthanasia-Final-1-17-20.pdf.

[vii] Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare, Welfare aspects of the slaughter of fur producing animals in Ireland: A report from the working-group to the Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare, Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council (2008). Retrieved from http://www.fawac.ie/media/fawac/content/publications/scientificreports/FinalReport WelfareFurProducingAnimalsIreland280715.pdf; Cooper, J., Mason, G., and Raj, M. Determination of the aversion of farmed mink (Mustela vison) to carbon dioxide. Veterinary Record (1998) 143, 359-361.

[viii] Wheeler, D. A. H., H. Hettige, P. Martin, and M. Singh, The Industrial Pollution Projection System. https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-1431.

[ix] The Guardian. 2013, Is the fur trade sustainable? Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/sustainable-fashion-blog/is-fur-trade-sustainable.

[x] Fur Free Alliance. 2016. European Commission withdraws children's wear with toxic fur. Retrieved from https://www.furfreealliance.com/european-commission-withdraws-childrens-wear-with-toxic-fur-collars/.

[xi] Sidik, S.M. Bird flu outbreak in mink sparks concern about spread in people, Nature (January 2023). Retrieved from https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-00201-2.

[xii] Georgia H. 2023. Virus in Furs: How fashion-fueled mink farms are the perfect petri dish for a future pandemic. The Pathologist. Retrieved from https://thepathologist.com/outside-the-lab/virus-in-furs.

[xiii] Humane Society International. 2023. Fur industry accused of greenwashing as new report reveals carbon footprint of fur fashion far higher than other materials. Retrieved from https://www.hsi.org/news-resources/fur-industry-accused-of-greenwashing-as-new-report-reveals-carbon-footprint-of-fur-fashion-far-higher-than-other-materials/.

[xiv] Carpenter, G. 2024. A full-cost account of the EU fur industry A full-cost account of the EU fur industry. Retrieved from https://griffincarpenter.org/reports/a-full-cost-account-of-the-eu-fur-industry.

[xv] The Guardian. 2012. 'Eco-friendly' fur ad banned: Fur breeders' campaign ruled misleading by ASA. Retrieved from

https://www.theguardian.com/media/2012/mar/21/eco-friendly-fur-ad-banned.

[xvi] Women's Wear Daily. 2018. French Independent Advertising Authority Finds Pro-Fur Campaign Misleading. Retrieved from https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/french-independent-advertising-authority-finds-pro-fur-campaign-misleading-1202916577/.

[xvii] Niemiec, R. 2025. New Research Shows Strong Public Support for State Fur Bans in the Northeast. Retrieved from https://sites.warnercnr.colostate.edu/animalhumanpolicy/public-perspectives-and-effective-messaging-on-fur-farming-in-the-northeastern-united-states/.

[xviii] Polling shows that a majority of Massachusetts voters support legislation to stop the sale of clothing and other products containing fur from animals. Humane Society Legislative Fund, Massachusetts voters support ban on fur products (2019). Retrieved from https://hslf.org/press-release/2019/05/massachusetts-voters-support-ban-fur-products; Fur Free Alliance, Majority of Massachusetts voters want to make it illegal to sell fur clothing (2017). Retrieved from https://www.furfreealliance.com/majority-massachusetts-voters-want-make-illegal-sell-fur-clothing/.

[xix] Ibid.