

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5012

Title: AN ACT PROHIBITING THE PRACTICE OF SHARK FINNING.

Vote Date: 2/19/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 1/31/2025

File No.: 50

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

CO-SPONNSORS:

Rep. Gresko, 121st Dist.

Rep. Menapace, 37th Dist.

Rep. Wood, 29th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill seeks to ban shark finning as well as the sale of shark fins in Connecticut. Sharks are important to the marine ecosystem and are facing declining numbers. While there is no evidence that shark finning is occurring in Connecticut, this law would demonstrate Connecticut's opposition to shark finning. In addition, banning the trade of shark fins in Connecticut would ensure that Connecticut is not funding shark finning that is occurring elsewhere. Many neighboring states have enacted similar legislation banning shark finning and the trade of shark fins, and this bill would put Connecticut's laws in alignment with those of neighboring states.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katy Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

Commissioner Dykes offered testimony in support of the bill, because it would help shark conservation efforts. She notes that DEEP does not have any evidence that there is shark finning occurring in Connecticut, but that the bill would bring Connecticut's laws into alignment with those of neighboring states.

Commissioner Dykes expressed support for the bill's exception to the proposed ban for smooth dogfish, as well as supporting an exception for "fins that are removed during the processing of legally harvested dogfish species" and the order Batoidea. These exceptions

would minimize disruption to the fishing industry and are consistent with the exceptions offered by neighboring states.

She concludes by suggesting that enforcement should be assigned to DEEP ("given existing Title 26 authority").

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Tanya Bourgoin, Wildlife Chair, Sierra Club CT

Chairman Bourgoin offered testimony in support of the bill. She discussed the importance of protecting sharks because of the decline in their population, their status as an endangered species, and the important role that they play in maintaining biodiversity in the marine ecosystem.

Chairman Bourgoin also pointed out that a decline in the shark population can have a negative economic impact on the ecotourism industry in coastal communities. She also stressed the importance of Connecticut joining in with neighboring states in enacting the ban.

Lori Brown, Executive Director, CT League of Conservation Voters

Executive Director Brown wrote in support of the bill. She shared that shark populations are in decline, often due to the demand for fins to be used in shark fin soup.

She believes that the bill's exemption for Smooth-Hound (Dogfish) sharks should be removed. Further, she points out that "Shark finning is already illegal in U.S. waters, but there are no restrictions on the sale of shark fin products" so it is important to ban the trade of shark fins in order to remove the incentive for people to practice shark finning.

Susan Eastwood, Chapter Chair, Sierra Club CT

Chairman Eastwood submitted testimony in support of the bill and believes that in addition to the species listed it should include all sharks and rays.

William Hyatt, Vice Chair, Connecticut Fisheries Advisory Council

Vice Chairman Hyatt wrote testimony in support of the bill. He noted that sharks are particularly vulnerable to overfishing because of their long lifespans and low reproduction rate, and that this overfishing is often motivated by the shark fins high value in foreign markets.

Vice chairman Hyatt voiced support for the bill's exemptions for smooth dogfish, since there are existing federal quotas that prevent overharvesting. He expressed that the Fishery Advisory Council had concerns with previous proposed legislation because it would have put restrictions on the sale of legally harvested spiny dogfish, which could have led to waste. In contrast, the Fishery Advisory council does not have the same concerns with this bill as it would not restrict the sale of legally harvested spiny dogfish to out of state processors.

Mary Mushinsky, State Representative, 85th District

Representative Mushinsky submitted written testimony expressing her longstanding support of the bill. She discussed the importance of sharks to the marine ecosystem. In addition, Rep Mushinsky urged the removal of the exemption for smooth dogfish and rays.

Annie Hornish, Connecticut Senior State Director, The Human Society of the United States

Director Hornish submitted testimony in support of the bill. She discussed the importance of maintaining the shark population order to protect the marine ecosystem and the positive economic impact of sharks on the ecotourism industry in coastal towns.

Director Hornish proposed amendments to the language of the bill to strengthen it, including removing the exemptions for Batoidea (please see linked testimony)

Over 100 other people also submitted testimony in support of the bill, citing the important role that sharks play in the marine ecosystem and the health of the oceans, as well as the cruelty and wastefulness of the practice of shark finning.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Anita Taylor

Mrs. Taylor submitted testimony opposing the bill.

Reported by: Lauren Kaiser Krause

Date, March 5th, 2025