

State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

May 30, 2014

Governor Dannel P. Malloy
State Capitol
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Governor Malloy,

The bill to allow the harvesting of glass eels, the transparent, larval form of American eels, is on your desk for possible signature. We ask you to veto HB 5417, as the bill is premature. It would remove the ban on taking glass eels, which scientists agree are in serious decline, before we have a decision from the US Fish and Wildlife Service on the potential listing of this species as "threatened" under the federal Endangered Species Act. That decision will be made by September 2015, so the earliest the Connecticut General Assembly should even consider changing the status of this animal is the January 2016 session. Would it not be absurd for Connecticut to allow the taking of a species which is protected by federal law?

As you may know, the bill was forced through the House and Senate in the last few minutes of the 2014 session by the minority party, who organized a filibuster of other important bills still on the calendar in order to force a vote on glass eels. If not for the filibuster of bills such as the budget implementer, we doubt glass eels would have passed this year.

The sponsor of the bill wished to pass HB 5417 to influence an imminent vote at the spring meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to "share the wealth" of the lucrative glass eel fishery, which is now concentrated in Maine and, to a lesser extent, South Carolina. The regional vote failed. We should use this regional defeat as an opportunity to determine if the species can recover before we open up the Connecticut market. Our glass eels are very valuable because eels have been reduced to only 1% of their former numbers in Asia. The demand in Asia for a species that has been driven almost to extinction on their shores has sent vendors to Connecticut.

On a personal note, I have seen glass eels only once in 12 years of monitoring the migrating fishes of the Quinnipiac River, and it was 12 years ago. They have not been back since. The 2012 Benchmark American Eel Stock Assessment found the American eel population in U.S. waters is depleted. The assessment found the stock is at or near historically low levels due to a combination of historical overfishing, habitat loss and alteration, productivity and food web alterations, predation, turbine mortality, changing climatic and oceanic conditions, toxins and

contaminants, and disease. Conservationists, including the CT Fund for the Environment and the Norwalk River Watershed Association, testified against the bill. The eels are so valuable that ending the ban will encourage poachers to hunt the remaining eels at night. They can be worth up to \$2,000/pound.

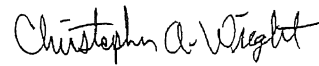
We hope you will agree that this bill can wait, and should be vetoed for this year. In the interim, we should let scientists tell us if the population can withstand a harvest. We should let the US Fish and Wildlife Service finish their evaluation of the threat to the species and wait for their decision in 2015. Then, and only then, will it be appropriate for Connecticut to legalize a glass eel harvest.

Sincerely,

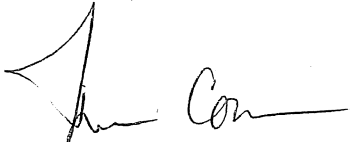


Mary Mushinsky
State Representative-85th

Roland Lemar
State Representative-96th



Christopher Wright
State Representative-77th



Theresa Conroy
State Representative-105th



Patricia Dillon
State Representative-92nd



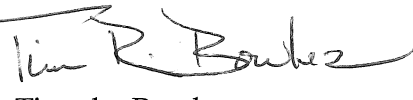
Diana Urban
State Representative-43rd




Susan Johnson
State Representative-49th



Emmett D. Riley
State Representative-46th



Timothy Bowles
State Representative-42nd



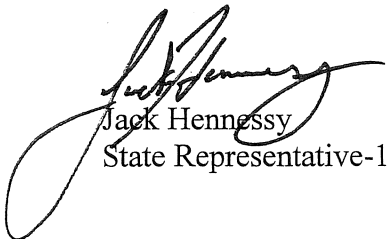
William Tong
State Representative-147th



Paul Davis
State Representative-117th



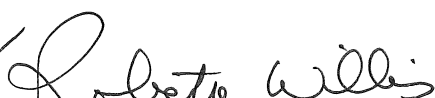
Mike Demicco
State Representative-21st



Jack Hennessy
State Representative-127th



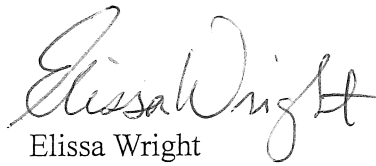
Geoff Luxenberg
State Representative-12th



Roberta Willis
State Representative-64th



Edwin Vargas
State Representative-6th




Elissa Wright
State Representative-41st



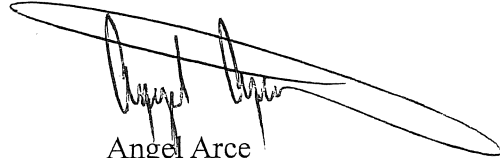
Gregory Haddad
State Representative-54th



Robert Megna
State Representative-97th



Rick Lopes
State Representative-24th



Angel Arce
State Representative-4th



Joe Diminico
State Representative-13th



Christina "Tita" Ayala
State Representative-128th