

February 3, 2025

Dear Chair Solomon, First Vice Chair O'Brien, Second Vice Chair Caldwell, and Members of the House Corporations Committee,

I have written to request that you vote in favor of House Bill No. H-5214 when it comes before you.

This bill bans the sale of parrots at pet stores if they come from a breeder or a broker. While the pet store can still sell parrots, those parrots must be obtained from animal care facilities or animal rescue organizations. This bill also prohibits the sale at any outdoor markets or retail parking lots.

Why is this bill important? I'll give you several reasons:

1. Huge Parrot-Breeding Mills Breed Many of the Birds for Sale in Pet Stores

In these filthy facilities, breeders keep hundreds of birds in rows of barren cages, depriving the social and intelligent animals of enrichment or interaction. These seedy operations are no different from other breeding mills, like puppy mills, where animals are churned out as quickly as possible for profit.

2. Breeders Steal Baby Birds Away from Their Doting Parents

In order to force mother birds—who are possibly still grieving and recovering—to lay eggs again more quickly, breeders take their eggs and hatchlings away and shove them under hot, artificial lights. There, the newborns huddle together on paper towels in a plastic bin. Humans feed the young birds unnaturally by hand, denying them the warmth and care of their parents. To reduce costs further, breeding mills often sell babies like these to pet stores, where they may be fed by inexperienced or undertrained staff members.

For example, Petco sells birds who have been “hand-fed,” which means that humans tore them from their parents at a young age. Pet stores, websites, and breeders falsely market hand-fed birds as friendlier and better able to bond with humans because of their forced early exposure to them— but removing a fledgling from his or her nest is always inhumane. Baby parrots, for example, have evolved to stay with their parents for months in nature.

Many young birds for sale in pet stores die as a direct or indirect result of hand feeding, while the survivors go out onto the sales floor. There, salesclerks try to peddle them to uninformed customers in an environment that’s loud, bustling, unfamiliar, and stressful for the animals.

3. Millions of Birds Worldwide Are Stolen from Their Homes and Smuggled Illegally

Once they've been torn from their nests, mates, or flocks, these birds are traded on the black market. Some birds may spend the rest of their lives in a state of mourning or distress after being abused and exploited by humans in this way.

Illicit parrot trafficking has reached alarming proportions, making it a multi-billion-dollar industry worldwide. The demand for parrots as pets, exhibition attractions, and even status symbols has fueled the expansion of this illegal trade. The exotic nature and unparalleled beauty of parrots make them highly valuable in the black market.

Parrot trafficking involves a variety of illicit methods employed by smugglers to transport these birds across borders. Often, parrots are captured from their natural habitats using cruel and inhumane techniques, such as the destruction of nesting sites or the use of mist nets. They are then smuggled, hidden away in cramped and unsuitable conditions, with little regard for their well-being. In some instances, parrots' feathers are dyed or clipped to deceive authorities and potential buyers.

The global impact of parrot trafficking extends far beyond the immediate harm caused to individual birds. This illegal trade has severe ecological consequences as parrots play a vital role in the ecosystem by dispersing seeds and pollinating flowers. Additionally, the loss of parrots disrupts the delicate balance of biodiversity, with implications for other species and their habitats. By tackling this issue, we can safeguard not only parrot populations but also the ecological integrity of our planet.

4. Physical and psychological harm to parrots

Parrot trafficking inflicts severe physical and psychological harm on these intelligent and social birds. During capture and transportation, parrots are often deprived of food, water, and proper shelter, leading to malnutrition and dehydration. The stressful conditions they endure during smuggling can result in injuries and even death. Furthermore, the removal of parrots from their natural habitats and separation from their family groups causes immense emotional distress, leading to behavioral and mental health issues.

5. Destruction of natural habitats

The illicit parrot trade contributes to the destruction of natural habitats as traffickers exploit the environments where parrots live. This destruction not only threatens the parrot population but also diminishes the resources available to other wildlife. Deforestation, driven by the demand for parrots, disrupts ecosystems and results in the loss of biodiversity.

6. Threats to parrot populations

Parrot trafficking poses a significant threat to the survival of various parrot species. The relentless capture and removal of these birds from the wild, combined with the destruction of their habitats, pushes many parrot species to the brink of extinction. These actions disrupt breeding patterns and overall reproductive success, exacerbating the already critical decline in parrot populations worldwide.

7. Inhumane capture and transportation methods

Wildlife smuggling, including parrot trafficking, involves inhumane capture and transportation methods that cause immense suffering to the animals involved. The use of indiscriminate traps, chemicals, or physical force results in injuries, stress, and fatalities. The cramped and unsanitary conditions during transportation exacerbate the physical and psychological harm inflicted on the animals, leading to higher mortality rates.

8. Health and welfare problems for smuggled birds

Smuggled parrots suffer from numerous health and welfare problems as a result of their illegal captivity. These birds often endure extended periods without access to adequate food, water, or proper veterinary care. Consequently, malnutrition, dehydration, and disease become prevalent. The stress and trauma experienced during smuggling further compromise their immune systems and overall well-being. **The chances of survival for smuggled birds are significantly reduced, and those who do survive often require extensive medical intervention.**

For the above reasons, I urge you to vote in favor of House Bill No. H-5214.

Sincerely,

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