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BREAKING: Illinois Stands Up for Sharks and Healthy Oceans

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It is not often that the State and people of Illinois have the opportunity to take action to help protect the world's oceans so acutely. Today, as I write from the Illinois State Capitol, I am excited to share that the Illinois House of Representatives has just passed House Bill 4119—a proposal to end Illinois' contribution to an unsustainable practice of hunting sharks for their fins. This action joins Illinois with a growing number of states that are taking bold action to protect sharks. With strong bipartisan support, the Illinois House voted 81-33 this afternoon with overwhelming support to pass the measure. With momentum from the House, the Illinois Senate is now poised to take it up. NRDC would especially like to thank the bill's sponsor: [State Representative Sara Feigenholtz](#), for her leadership in positioning Illinois to join the growing national and international trend to ban the possession, sale, trade, and distribution of shark fins.

It is the intense demand for shark fins, and the astronomically high prices fins fetch, that drives the [killing of an estimated that 26-73 million sharks each year](#). While the majority of shark fins are consumed overseas, Illinois is actually one of the largest markets for shark fins in the U.S. By ending the shark fin trade in our state, we end our contribution to a trade that threatens a species that has survived over 400 million years. [The International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\) reports that more than one-third of open ocean shark species are threatened](#). Sharks are an apex predators at or near the top of the food chain that play a critical role in balancing marine ecosystems.

Today's vote is an exciting step towards a significant conservation victory. I am especially encouraged by the enthusiasm and interest from members of the General Assembly and communities across my home-town State of Illinois who have said they are ready stand up to protect sharks and our oceans. As a life-long Illinois resident and long time advocate for the oceans, I respectfully urge members of the Illinois Senate to support this effort by passing H.B. 4119 as it moves to the senate chambers.