

February 23, 2011

Assemblymember Paul Fong
Assemblymember Jared Huffman
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Strong Support for Assembly Bill 376 (Shark Fins)

Dear Assemblymembers Fong and Huffman,

I am writing in strong support of Bill 376 to prohibit the possession, sale, trade and distribution of shark fins in California. As the Founder of Shark Truth and a Chinese-Canadian, I commend California for introducing this important legislation that will protect sharks and maintain the health of our oceans' ecosystems by banning the cruel and environmentally damaging consumption of shark fin products.

San Francisco is home to the largest Chinese restaurant industry in North America, with Vancouver following suit. Shark Truth has been working in Vancouver's Chinese community to promote awareness, education and action to decrease the demand for shark fin soup by specifically targeting wedding couples – where shark fin is most popularly served. The shark fins served at these banquets are supplied by the restaurants, as well as retailers and wholesalers of shark fin. Thus, restaurants and the supply chain of shark fin play a leading role in contributing to the demise of the populations of sharks. Over half of oceanic sharks are being pushed to an elevated risk of extinction with many species nearing the brink already – just for shark fin soup.

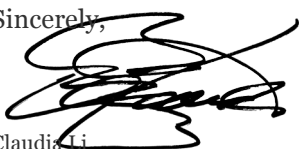
Through our wedding campaign, young couples-to-be from around the world have sent in their pledges to 'Stop the Soup' (i.e. not serve shark fin soup) at their wedding banquet. With sustainability as a core topic of conversation for these generations, the trend of serving shark fin soup alternatives at banquet weddings is galvanizing strong support from the Chinese community and is receiving substantial attention from both Western and Chinese media.

Nearly two decades of regulatory efforts focused on the supply side of shark finning have failed to stop the shark fin trade. Up to 73 million sharks can per year are killed -- a rate that is threatening some species with extinction which could permanently damage our integral ocean ecosystems. The only realistic way to end this mass slaughter and ecosystem devastation is to stop the trade completely– and AB 376's focus on the demand-side of the market is imperative.

If AB 376 is enacted, California will join Hawaii, Saipan and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands by setting an important precedent that we hope other states and nations will shortly follow. As the largest market for shark fin outside of Asia, California has an obligation to act.

We are inspired to see California take leadership on protecting sharks and the balance of our oceans' ecosystems. Shark Truth looks forward to modeling similar change in Canada after Bill 376 is enacted.

Sincerely,



Claudia Li
Shark Truth Founder & Co-Chair

