



ZOOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
OF AMERICA

March 8, 2016

Chairperson Schwartz and Members of the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee:

I am writing to express the Zoological Association of America's support of Senate Bill 97.

The Zoological Association of America (ZAA) is an organization founded to promote responsible ownership, management, conservation, and propagation of animals in both privately funded and publicly funded facilities through professional standards in husbandry, animal care, safety, and ethics.

We urge you to pass this bill immediately as it provides for much needed revisions to K.S.A. 32-1300, which deals with possession and handling of dangerous regulated animals in Kansas.

There are two provisions in 32-1300 that are exceptionally damaging to professionally managed zoological facilities in Kansas.

The statute 32-1300 completely prohibits all contact between regulated big cats and the general public regardless of size and circumstances. The statute was designed to prevent private ownership of big cats to ensure the public will not interact with these large animals. This bill still preserves that prohibition while allowing accredited zoos to offer supervised interaction with young cubs in educational programs and media interviews. It is common to see this type of interaction at zoos across the country as well as on television programs.

Our feedback from zoos visitors states that immersive interactive experiences at zoos provide more of a learning opportunity than watching nature documentaries. Nothing compares to experiencing a baby animal through an interactive experience at the zoo while learning about its habits and natural history. As with any zoo that offers these interactions, this is in a safe and supervised interactive environment under complete control of the trainer at all times.

Approval of SB97 would restore limited, safe and supervised interaction through the adoption of the Zoological Association of America's (ZAA) safety guidelines. ZAA's guidelines are utilized in all of our accredited facilities throughout the country and have proven to be very adequate.

Tanganyika Wildlife Park has proven to be an international leader for the zoological community in propagating endangered species and working to educate the public regarding the plight of these critically endangered cats. Their efforts are now being seriously handicapped by the language in the current statute.

Tanganyika Wildlife Park is regularly asked to appear with their animals on both local and national TV programs, such as David Letterman, Good Morning America, Fox News, and the Talk, to promote conservation awareness of these magnificent species.

The changes in this bill would further conservation education for the public by allowing industry accredited facilities to travel with cats as ambassadors for their species during educational outreach programs and the promotion of conservation initiatives for their respective species.

The law as currently written robs the people of Kansas from a life changing experiences. Furthermore, it hobbles the promotion of conservation efforts; ultimately placing an economic hardship on facilities like Tanganyika Wildlife Park in Sedgwick County.

Tanganyika Wildlife Park is a great family attraction for Kansas and needs to have every opportunity to disseminate its education and conservation message to its visitors. It is an economic asset to the state of Kansas and should be given every opportunity to continue it mission.

I encourage you to pass SB 97 and correct the inequities in the current law.

Sincerely,

Alan Smith