

## **Heartland Veterinary Services, Inc**

Gregory J. Seiler, DVM  
2800 N. 247<sup>th</sup> St. West  
Andale, KS 67001  
(316) 444-2377

Chairman Schwartz and Members of the House Ag and Natural Resources Committee

I am writing this letter in support of SB 97. As a practicing veterinarian for 35 years and the attending veterinarian for Tanganyika Wildlife Park for over 20 years I can see no valid reason to deny visitors the rare opportunity to experience these young cats in a closely supervised environment. There is no better way to educate visitors than through up close and personal experiences with these animals.

As for human/animal safety, I can say that in the 20 years previous to the state contact ban passed in 2005, the owners and staff of what was to be Tanganyika Wildlife Park were able to share their young cats through educational programs and media events without harm to the animals or the visiting public. Today oversight is provided through industry standards provided by the zoological accrediting organizations such as ZAA and AZA. Further scrutiny is provided by USDA, the licensing authority for all zoo exhibitors which has strict guidelines dealing with the welfare of the animals in a contact situation to ensure these animals are handled safely for the animals benefit and those of the visiting public. Utilizing young cats for educational programs is commonly practiced throughout the country. Accredited zoos in Kansas should be free to decide whether they wish to allow this practice or not in their respective institutions.

As for the question of zoonotic disease transmission, I believe this is a myth promoted by HSUS and other detractors who are campaigning to ban what seems to be all animal human contact. I know of no evidence whatsoever of zoonotic diseases being passed from these cats to people and visa versa. I contend you are more likely to contract something from your family dog or cat because they have considerably more exposure to people, dogs, cats and other animals. These young cats are closely supervised in a protected environment and are under constant regulated veterinary supervision. In fact, if you ask the CDC about this being a problem they will tell you they do not track such incidents as they are virtually nonexistent.

I encourage you to pass SB 97 so accredited zoos like Tanganyika Wildlife Park can once again utilize their young cats in their education and conservation programs.

Sincerely,

Gregory J. Seiler, DVM