

March 4, 2016

Kansas House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Re: SB 97

Dear Representatives,

I am writing to ask you to oppose SB 97 that would allow members of the public to come into contact with dangerous big cats.

This issue is very personal to us. On August 18, 2005, our lives changed forever. On that day, a Siberian tiger killed our daughter, Haley Hilderbrand. You cannot possibly imagine the pain of losing a child until you have experienced it. It is a pain that never goes away. You just learn to live with it.

Haley was posing for her senior high school picture next to a tiger at a USDA licensed wildlife facility in Mound Valley, Kansas when the animal attacked and killed her despite being on a leash held by the handler. At 17 years old, it never occurred to her, since she was at a licensed facility, and being assisted by an apparently trained handler, that she was in any danger.

Not long after Haley was killed, Kansas passed the existing law that bans ownership of big cats and, although it has an exemption for USDA licensed facilities, it prohibits any contact between big cats and members of the public. We worked tirelessly and testified repeatedly to get this bill passed. Many Kansas residents also concerned about the issue supported this bill.

The public contact provision is pivotal to the success of the bill protecting the public. Without it in place, the line between safety and common sense is blurred and accidents will happen. Since

1990, captive big cats in the US alone have mauled 281 people.

The legislation, SB 97, would reverse all the work we have done to protect other mothers, fathers and children in Kansas from this kind of senseless tragedy. Excluding the clouded leopards from the Act-allowing the public to keep them as pets and take them to private, public, commercial and retail establishments and allowing exotics less than 40 pounds to be handled by the public is just asking for trouble. Even the supporters of SB 97 are asking for a signed waiver of responsibility in case of injury.

We hope that you share our deep concern about this issue and agree to oppose SB 97 and keep the existing law intact with a ban on contact between big cats of any size and members of the public.

Thank you very much for your time and for considering our very personal request.

Sincerely,

Michael and Ronda Good