

March 8, 2016

House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Chair Schwartz and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding Senate Bill 97. My name is Kim Pugliesi and I am a mother in Andover, Kansas. I oppose this bill.

SB 97 removes the dangerous clouded leopard from the Act, allowing anyone to keep them as pets in their homes or backyards. This change in the law is irresponsible and will put neighbors and the community at risk.

If passed SB 97 strikes the sensible current prohibition from taking dangerous regulated animals such as lions, tigers, mountain lions, leopards, cheetahs and other big cats to private, public, commercial or retail establishments.

The bill will also allow the public to hold 10 pound tigers etc. and hug and pet dangerous animals weighing up to 40 pounds. As a concerned parent I want to know what state agency will be weighing and enforcing these provisions. Under the current budget crises I can't imagine there will be any oversight.

SB 97 establishes meaningless "precautions" for handlers who present their animals to the public, which are ineffective and dangerous. Handlers are required to control animals such as lions, tigers, mountain lions, leopards, cheetahs and other exotic cats by keeping the animal in a harness and connected leash.

The signed release indicates the dangers that some parents simply see as a precaution for the person handling the animal. They will feel comfortable because someone is there with the cat. What can go wrong?

As the mother of two young children, I don't want to have my children anywhere near dangerous animals. The Sedgwick County zoo, in my community is clear on the dangers of allowing public contact. You have their written testimony in your packets today. I believe you need to rely on the zoos that have made it clear what this bill will do. It will not protect the cats. It will not promote education or conservation and it will not protect my children or your children.

This current dangerous regulated animal act is working in Kansas, thanks to the legislators who passed it in 2006. I urge you to oppose SB 97. Thank you.

Kimberly Pugliese

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