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January 4, 2016

Dear Honorable Members of the Kansas Legislature,

I am writing to oppose SB 97, legislation which would allow members of the public to have physical contact with certain dangerous animals.

Founded in 1924, the AZA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of animal welfare, conservation, education, science, and recreation. AZA is the independent accrediting organization for the premier zoos and aquariums in America and the world including seven institutions in Kansas: Hutchinson Zoo, Lee Richardson Zoo, Rolling Hills Zoo, Sedgwick County Zoo, Sunset Zoological Park, The David Traylor Zoo of Emporia, and Topeka Zoo. AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums collectively draw more than 180 million visitors annually, generate more than \$17 billion in annual economic activity, and support more than 165,000 jobs. They also spend annually \$160 million on field conservation, supporting more than 2,600 projects in 130 countries. Fewer than 10 percent of the 2,800 wildlife exhibitors licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the Animal Welfare Act meet the more comprehensive standards of AZA accreditation. Please refer to the attached document which provides a general overview of some key areas of the AZA's accreditation standards.

The AZA recognizes the value of ambassador animals in delivering conservation and education messages to the public, and the AZA accreditation standards require that these elements are part of any ambassador animal presentation. The AZA Ambassador Animal Policy requires all accredited institutions with ambassador animals to develop an institutional program animal policy that clearly identifies and justifies those species and individuals approved as program animals and details their long-term management plan and educational program objectives. Additionally, the accreditation standards require that the conditions and treatment of animals in education programs must meet standards set for the remainder of the animal collection, including species-appropriate shelter, exercise, appropriate environmental enrichment, access to veterinary care, nutrition, and other related standards.

Some AZA-accredited institutions use cheetahs and clouded leopards as ambassador animals in carefully controlled public venues. The AZA has worked closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) about the need for regulatory flexibility in these outreach programs so that AZA members could conduct their ambassador programs with the full knowledge that they are following USDA policies and procedures. The

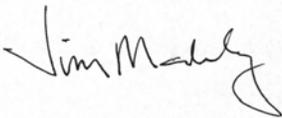
agreed-upon solution was for all AZA-accredited institutions with cheetah and clouded leopard outreach programs to work with the USDA Big Cat Specialist and their USDA inspector to demonstrate their outreach program, including direct public contact restrictions, sufficient barriers and other safeguards, and to work through any perceived issues or concerns with USDA. So far, this arrangement has worked well.

SB 97 would allow full contact with lions, tigers, jaguars, mountain lions, and other leopards weighing less than ten pounds and incidental contact with those same animals weighing less than forty pounds. Only trained professionals should have contact with these animals, regardless of weight, to assure that the health and safety of the general public is protected and that the welfare of the animals comes first. Allowing untrained individuals to hold these animals, even temporarily, could result in serious injuries. Additionally, the handling by the general public of these animals at such weights and young ages would put tremendous stress on the animals and place their welfare in jeopardy. Therefore, I urge you to oppose SB 97 to protect the public and assure that these animals continue to receive the best possible care, according to modern zoological and husbandry best practices.

The AZA believes that nothing is more important than assuring the highest standards of animal care. AZA accreditation is a publicly recognized badge signifying excellence in, and commitment to, veterinary care, ethics, physical facilities, staffing, conservation, education, safety and security, and in particular, animal management and welfare. The AZA-accredited institutions in Kansas are making an important difference in the conservation of the world's great species and in inspiring Kansas schoolchildren and families to play a part in preserving wildlife.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If I can be of assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Maddy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "y".

Jim Maddy
President and CEO



Accreditation by the AZA assures that the highest standards for animal management and welfare, veterinary care, safety, conservation, and education are followed at AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums across the country. AZA distinguishes itself from other accrediting organizations in several key areas including (but not limited to):

Accreditation

- Institutions must complete a 27 page application and submit a vast amount of material and documentation just to apply [4-6 months].
- After months of study and evaluation, a 3-5 day inspection of the institution takes place generating a detailed report and a list of items which the institution must address.
- A 12-member independent Accreditation Commission consisting of leaders in zoo/aquarium operations, animal husbandry, and veterinary medicine thoroughly evaluates each case, assesses the institution's progress and adequacy in addressing those items identified at inspection, and interviews the institution's top officials.
- Standards are based on accepted best practices and science-based research and are revised annually to assure that they stay current modern zoological practice and philosophy.
- Standards cover all areas of an institution's operations, including financial, so as to assure that an institution has the stability to maintain AZA standards throughout the five-year period of accreditation.
- AZA accreditation standards are enforced. Accreditation can be rescinded any time standards are not being maintained. Since 1974, 62 institutions have had their accreditation repealed or denied.
- Complete details of the AZA accreditation process, along with copies of the standards and the application, are available to the public for download at the AZA's website. A copy of the 2016 AZA Accreditation Standards and Related Policies may be found at <https://www.aza.org/uploadedFiles/Accreditation/AZA-Accreditation-Standards.pdf>.

Finance Requirements (highlights)

- Institutions must provide sufficient evidence of adequate financial stability including complete financial reports.
- Insurance coverage must be provided for visitors, staff, volunteers/docents, and physical facilities.
- The institution must have a sufficient written contingency plan in the event that significant decreases in operating income should occur.

Animal Care, Welfare, and Safety Requirements (highlights)

- All animals must be provided veterinary care, daily enrichment, and safely housed in appropriate groupings which meet their psychological and social needs.
- All animal transportation must be conducted in a manner that is safe and minimizes risk to the animal(s), employees, and general public.

- Live-action emergency drills must be conducted at least once annually for each of the four basic types of emergency (fire; weather/environment appropriate to the region; injury to staff or a visitor; animal escape).

Wildlife Conservation Requirements (highlights)

- The institution must have a written conservation action plan and also participate in every applicable Species Survival Plan (SSP) for each animal.
- The institution must be actively involved in regional or international conservation programs.
- By working closely with federal agencies and other partners, AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums are critical partners in reintroduction programs for a variety of species including black-footed ferrets, California condors, freshwater mussels, and golden lion tamarin, to name a few.

Education Requirements (highlights)

- The institution must prioritize education as a key component of its mission, and have a written education plan that matches current industry standards.
- Education must be under the direction of a paid staff person who is trained or has experience in educational programming.
- Institutions should participate in ongoing collaborative partnerships with organizations and individuals that can contribute to the expansion of their educational dimension (local colleges, universities, etc.).