



LINCOLN PARK ZOO
FOR WILDLIFE. FOR ALL.

July 6, 2020

The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Chairman
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans & Wildlife
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Chairman Huffman,

We are writing to express our support for the Captive Primate Safety Act (H.R. 1776), to prohibit interstate commerce in primates as pets, which had a hearing in the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans & Wildlife on June 25th.

Lincoln Park Zoo has long advocated for enhanced protections for primates, most effectively through the Project ChimpCARE initiative. That project produced the first-ever census of chimpanzees in the United States, including hundreds of privately-owned pets, and conducted important research demonstrating the detrimental effects of inaccurate portrayals of chimpanzees in the media. Our scientists worked with other groups in pushing through regulatory changes that helped protect chimpanzees in this country. Working with accredited zoos and sanctuaries to rehouse these individuals, the number of pet chimpanzees in the U.S. has decreased to just 15% of its previous levels. The number of smaller primates such as monkeys, has not undergone the same change despite the same public safety and animal welfare concerns.

Despite many advances in regulatory protections for primates over the past several decades, there remains a very active trade in primates for use as personal pets in the U.S. Estimates from more than 15 years ago approximate the number of pet monkeys in the U.S. exceeding 15,000, and there is no reason to think that number has decreased since that time.

While some local municipalities and states have passed laws that restrict the ownership of primates for use as personal pets, there is no federal law to regulate the interstate transport of these species for the purpose of pet ownership. The Captive Primate Safety Act ([H.R. 1776](#)) prohibits such trade and protects these cognitively-advanced animals. It mirrors the Captive Wildlife Safety Act of 2003, which prohibits interstate commerce in lions, tigers, and other big cats as pets, and was unanimously passed and signed into law by President Bush. H.R. 1776 simply adds primate species to that existing law. Because pet primates face similar inhumane treatment and pose similar threats to public health and safety, Lincoln Park Zoo supports adding primates to the list of species prohibited in the interstate commercial pet trade.

During the subcommittee hearing, Ranking Member McClintock indicated this bill would have a negative impact on zoos. This is actually not the case, as the bill is narrowly focused only on pet ownership, and explicitly exempts zoos from the prohibition on interstate commerce. The operation of zoos, including Lincoln Park Zoo, would not be affected by this legislation.

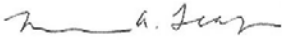
Support for the Captive Primate Safety Act is widespread, including endorsements from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and nine member zoos, as well as many sanctuaries, scientists, law enforcement officials, and animal welfare organizations.

Lincoln Park Zoo urges Congressional support for this legislation to curb the use of these highly intelligent and emotional complex animals as frivolous personal pets. Primates never make good pets, and such legislative advances will help ensure they are provided the care and protection they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Bell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Kevin Bell, President & CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maureen Leahy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Maureen Leahy, Vice President of Animal Care & Horticulture

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Ross". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Stephen Ross, Ph.D., Director of the Lester E. Fisher Center for the Study and Conservation of Apes