



# ANIMAL LEGAL DEFENSE FUND EST 1979

May 16, 2022

The Honorable Jared Huffman  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife  
Committee on Natural Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1332 Longworth  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cliff Bentz  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife  
Committee on Natural Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1329 Longworth  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Huffman and Ranking Member Bentz:

The Animal Legal Defense Fund is the nation's preeminent legal organization for animals, working to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. On behalf of our hundreds of thousands of members nationwide, I respectfully ask that you support H.R. 263, which would protect big cats from cruelty and communities from dangerous encounters with wild animals.

H.R. 263, the Big Cat Public Safety Act, would prohibit individuals from keeping big cats as pets and prohibit direct contact with big cat cubs. Private possession of big cats in America is a concerning reality. For example, there are currently more tigers living in captivity in the United States than there are left in the wild. At this very moment, people all over the country have big cats kept in their backyards, living rooms, and in cages in their homes. These are not adequate environments for big cat species, apex predators who require a vast amount of space and enrichment. In addition, direct contact with the public drives a cruel cycle of breeding and discarding big cat cubs. Cubs can only be used for public encounters for a short period of time before they grow too big, meaning new cubs must be bred constantly to keep up with the demand for public encounters. Cubs who have "aged out" of these public encounters are often sold into the private pet trade, illegally trafficked, or killed to make space for smaller cubs.

The Big Cat Public Safety Act would protect the public and first responders against dangerous big cat encounters as well. When big cats are kept as pets in private homes, enclosures are often inadequate, leading to escapes and attacks. In the past 30 years, there have been over 500 dangerous incidents involving captive big cats, with some of the most tragic resulting in the death of the escaped animal, companion animals who have been attacked, and even human children. First responders and law enforcement are not equipped to handle the specific dangers associated with big cat escapes, but they are tasked with controlling the situation regardless – putting them at even further risk when a big cat escapes from a private residence.

H.R. 263 is endorsed by the National Sheriff's Association, the Fraternal Order of Police, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, numerous animal protection organizations, and individual first responders. This legislation would further public safety and advance the protection of big cats from dangerous and exploitive situations.

I respectfully ask that the Subcommittee advance H.R. 263. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alicia Prygoski". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alicia Prygoski  
Senior Legislative Affairs Manager  
Animal Legal Defense Fund