



The Honorable Mike Quigley
U.S. House of Representatives
2078 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
U.S. Senate
706 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
U.S. Senate
513 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Brian Fitzpatrick
U.S. House of Representatives
271 Cannon House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
U.S. Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
U.S. Senate
217 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

May 24, 2022

Re: Support for Big Cat Public Safety Act (H.R. 263/S. 1210)

Dear Representatives and Senators:

My name is Kris Marino, and I am the Executive Director of Carolina Tiger Rescue, a true North Carolina sanctuary that currently cares for more than 20 big cats, including tigers, lions, and cougars. Our facility, one of the oldest in the country, is accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries and is a member of the Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance. On behalf of our members and supporters, **we urge you to support the Big Cat Public Safety Act (H.R. 263/S. 1210)**, which strengthens existing law to prohibit the breeding and possession of big cats as "pets" and prohibits public contact with big cats.

Untold numbers of captive tigers, lions, and other big cats live in the United States, most of them in shoddy roadside zoos, in private menageries, or in homes as pets - situations where the large animals are usually kept in small and insecure cages, are improperly fed, and are not provided appropriate veterinary care.

Carolina Tiger Rescue has been rescuing big cats for over 45 years and has become very knowledgeable with the dangerous industry that created the surplus of big cats in this country, which has resulted in the need for sanctuaries like ours. The large population of captive big cats is chiefly the result of public contact activities in which substandard facilities charge the public to pet, feed, play with, or get their picture taken with infant tigers, lions, leopards, etc. It is an activity that relies on the rampant breeding of big cats and has resulted in a surplus of big cats, **many of which may end up in the pet trade.** Bred specifically for the cub petting industry, the



babies are torn from their mothers at birth and are subjected to significant neglect and mistreatment during their time as photo props. At just a few months of age, when they have grown too large to be handled, they are warehoused in roadside zoos, sold into the pet trade, or killed. Meanwhile, new cubs continue to be produced, used for public contact, and disposed of— in a cruel cycle that has created an unsustainable number of “surplus” captive big cats. Prohibiting public contact with big cats will have a positive impact in curtailing America's big cat crisis.

Carolina Tiger Rescue has cared for many big cats who were victims of the U.S.'s largely unregulated trade in these species, including:

- In May 2021, our sanctuary aided the U.S. Department of Justice to execute a large-scale rescue of endangered big cats at Tiger King Park in Oklahoma. We are caring for four of the 68 cats who were confiscated, all of whom suffered from metabolic bone disease.
- In 2016, Carolina Tiger Rescue rescued 16 animals from a roadside zoo in Colorado that had 110 animals on 4 acres of land (our largest rescue to date):
 - Saber is a white tiger who was declawed and defanged both done so he was 'safer' to be handled. He was originally bred as part of a Las Vegas magicians act, a magician who is notorious for altering his animals in such inhumane ways. Due to the declaw, Carolina Tiger Rescue is keeping a close eye on Saber, for signs of arthritis which is not an uncommon occurrence in such mutilations. Carolina Tiger Rescue also had to conduct root canals on all 4 of Saber's canine teeth because those teeth had been filed down so far that the roots were exposed. The sheer act of breeding for white tigers is inhumane, as the only way to get white tigers is through inbreeding.
 - Caprichio Tiger was taken from his mother at birth to be used as a photo prop. As a result, he suffers from metabolic bone disease. As he grew large, his bones are not strong enough to support his weight properly. Due to this, he has arthritis in both his back legs, requires daily medication, and enclosure modifications to have some semblance of a normal life.
 - Of the 8 tigers we rescued from this roadside zoo, we are certain at least 5 of them were used in cub petting and have uncovered photos to prove it.
- Tigers Apache and Nitro, who were confiscated from a Kansas man who kept the tigers, as well as three lions, in a junkyard next to an abandoned motel.

Many believe that animals raised in captivity by humans lose their predatory instincts. This could not be further from the truth as they continue to act on their wild instincts. There have been countless dangerous encounters documented by police officers and other first responders, as well as attacks on private owners. Several wild cats at Carolina Tiger Rescue were turned over to us by private owners who could no longer properly and safely care for them.



Sanctuaries bear the burden of animal care when "pet" big cats inevitably escape, attack, or are confiscated from inappropriate and miserable living conditions. Tigers and other big cats can live into their late teens or longer, so we often will care for rescued animals for many years, at tremendous cost. But the sad truth is that only a tiny fraction of the large surplus of big cats in this country are lucky enough to end up in facilities such as ours because many qualified sanctuaries simply do not have the resources needed to provide the costly veterinary care, specialized diets, spacious enclosures, and enrichment they require.

If passed, H.R. 263/S. 1210 would take a significant burden off sanctuaries such as ours which are on the receiving end of the problems created by the exploitation of big cats in the pet trade and in programs that allow the public to handle big cat cubs. It will also enhance public safety, protect first responders, and advance animal welfare.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Kris Marino

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