

ANIMALFOLKS

March 25, 2022

Chair Torrey Westrom
Senate Agriculture and Rural Development Finance and Policy Committee
95 University Avenue W. Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3201
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Please do not jeopardize the safety of Minnesotans or captive wild animals. Oppose SF 4280.

Dear Chair Westrom and members of the committee:

We are respectfully asking you to oppose Senate File 4280. This is an issue that involves both animal welfare and public safety.

Years ago, the Minnesota Legislature recognized the problems faced by communities due to dangerous incidents involving big cats, bears, and primates who were privately owned and, in some cases, displayed to the public. These incidents involved life-threatening injuries to people due to animal attacks or escapes. MN Regulated Animal Law 346.155 was passed to restrict the possession of these species, which resulted in a decline in dangerous incidents. The law went into effect January 1, 2005.

Senate File 4280 will weaken this law by exempting the Zoological Association of America (ZAA), a zoo trade group, from this law. If passed, it would mean that ZAA-accredited facilities would no longer have to register regulated (captive) animals with local authorities, alert local law enforcement if their big cats, bears or primates escape, or comply with other state-mandated safety, animal care, and record-keeping requirements.

Numerous enforcement actions have been taken against ZAA-accredited facilities by the USDA where people, including children, were severely injured. Allowing this organization to be exempted means a higher risk of improper behavior, oversight, and care.

The safety of residents and animals in Minnesota should never be placed at risk. Please do not weaken existing law; keep standards strong. Oppose Senate File 4280.

Respectfully,

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