

# ANIMALFOLKS

March 29, 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.**

Dear Chair Westrom and members of the committee:

We oppose language that has been included in Article 3 Section 15 of the omnibus bill (Senate File 4019 A-1 DE Amendment) which exempts "institutions accredited by the Zoological Association of America (ZAA)" from Minn. Stat. sec. 346.155.

We are extremely disappointed that this language was added to the omnibus bill. As stated in our previous letter date 03-25-22, this is an issue that involves both animal welfare and public safety.

**The safety of residents and animals in Minnesota should never be placed at risk. We are asking you to delete this dangerous language from the omnibus bill.**

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.

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.

Exempting facilities accredited by the Zoological Association of America (ZAA) will weaken Minn. Stat. sec. 346.155. If passed, it would mean that ZAA-accredited facilities would no longer have to register regulated 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.

**Please do not weaken existing law; keep standards strong.** Delete the language that exempts ZAA facilities.

Respectfully,  
Ann Olson, Founder and Executive Director  
Animal Folks  
1041 Grand Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55015    ann@animalfolks.org