



LAKE SUPERIOR ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Our mission: to provide close-up animal experiences that inspire connections to wildlife and action toward conservation in our region and around the world.

Dear Senator Pappas & Committee Members,

We are writing to you as representatives of the Lake Superior Zoo. Our names are Lizzy Larson and Forrest Michaels, we hold the positions of Animal Care Director and Facility Director, respectively. We have almost 20 years of combined experience in our respective fields and take immense pride in our work at the zoo. As dedicated professionals, we are fully committed to ensuring the zoo's continued success and supplying the best possible care for our animals. We are here to testify in support of the \$1.5 million asset preservation funding for the Lake Superior Zoo. As the zoo celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, it holds a significant place in the history of not only Duluth but also the state of Minnesota. By investing in asset preservation, we believe that the zoo will continue to strengthen its relationship with the community and uphold its rich legacy. The proposed upgrades will make the zoo more accessible and sustainable. They will also allow us to make the necessary upgrades to animal habitats, ensuring that they meet and exceed the evolving standards for animal welfare, making us a leader among zoological institutions.

We have witnessed first-hand the harmful effects of deferred maintenance at our unique facility. Asset preservation funding will set our organization up for the future. Unrepaired walking surfaces and an outdated entrance create accessibility issues for members of our community. The cost of the upgrades is currently prohibitive, and repairs are time-consuming for facilities staff. To illustrate this, our black bear, tiger, and other pools are in various need of repair. The pool repairs alone would greatly reduce the LSZ's water consumption, guaranteeing much lower utility costs, considerably reducing our impact on the environment, and providing cleaner and more dynamic pools for our animals. The installation of LED and UV lights in buildings and exhibits would significantly reduce power consumption and prepare us for future AZA inspections. Upgrading our current HVAC systems will both improve air quality, allowing us to provide the ideal environments for many of our endangered animals, as well as reduce our carbon footprint. The planned ADA-accessible upgrades will make all team members and guests feel welcome.

The proposed funding from this bill will enable our celebrated and historic facility to complete the necessary repairs, upgrades, and improvements that are currently in a state of distress. Allowing our dedicated staff to focus on the fundamental modern animal standards that we pride ourselves on, throughout the entire park. These upgrades will assure a significant increase in efficiency for our Animal Care and Facilities departments' leading to a safer, more inclusive, and conservation-minded facility for the staff, animals, visitors, and community.

We value and acknowledge your support for this funding request, which will ensure the long-term success of the Lake Superior Zoo.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

Lizzy Larson
Director of Animal Management
Lake Superior Zoo

Forrest Michaels
Director of Facilities
Lake Superior Zoo