



HEMKER PARK & ZOO  
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Chair Aric Putnam  
Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development  
Committee 3215  
Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
RE: SF 739

Dear Chair Putnam and Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for MN SF 739. For over 35 years, Hemker Park & Zoo has been committed to the care, conservation, and sustainable management of reindeer, prioritizing their well-being while providing educational opportunities for the public.

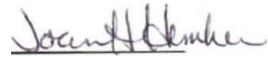
At Hemker Park & Zoo, we adhere to the highest standards in animal care, including best practices in husbandry, veterinary care, and conservation efforts. Our reindeer management practices are grounded in responsible and thoughtful approaches to ensuring their health, safety, and welfare. The passage of MN SF 739 is critical for us to continue these efforts without unnecessary restrictions that could negatively affect the animals and our broader conservation programs.

Our plea is not to bring white-tailed deer into Minnesota, but rather to continue our work with reindeer, preserve their genetic diversity, and continue working with the Minnesota Board of Animal Health, which oversees the management and state regulations of reindeer in Minnesota. Under current Minnesota law, AZA-accredited facilities are permitted to import and manage Cervidae. We work in close collaboration with other AZA-accredited institutions to ensure the highest standards of care. Hemker Park & Zoo is home to over 48 animals from 26 different AZA-accredited institutions, and our facility undergoes regular, rigorous inspections by these institutions to ensure that our husbandry practices, veterinary services, exhibit quality, and safety protocols meet or exceed the highest standards. One of our co-owners is an active member of the AZA.

The proposed amendments in MN SF 739 aim to preserve genetic diversity while maintaining the current regulatory framework. These changes will enable the continued responsible management of reindeer, promote their welfare, and support essential educational and conservation programs.

I respectfully urge your support for MN SF 739 and thank the author of SF 739.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Joan Hemker", written in a cursive style.

Joan Hemker  
Owner & Co-founder  
Hemker Park & Zoo