



March 31, 2025

Dear Chair Xiong,

As fellow paleontologists in the state of Minnesota, we write to you in support of the Science Museum of Minnesota's efforts to establish *Castoroides ohioensis* (an ancient and giant relative of the modern beaver) as the state fossil. We think this is an excellent choice to represent the paleontological record of this state, as it is well-represented with multiple nearly complete skeletons. *Castoroides* would have likely played an important role within its ecosystem at the end of the last Ice Age, just as their modern relatives play an important part in Minnesota's habitats today. Minnesotans can see an original mounted skeleton of *Castoroides* at the Science Museum as well as a phenomenal life reconstruction (plus an original fossil jaw) at the Bell Museum. This life reconstruction was created here in Minnesota as well, by the great team at Blue Rhino Studio in Eagan.

As paleontologists, we often find that many members of the public are unaware that Minnesota even has fossils. By declaring a state fossil, this will increase public awareness that there is a fossil record in Minnesota and hopefully lead to further education about our shared impressive prehistory. We see great value in students learning about *Castoroides* alongside Minnesota's other state symbols. All but four U.S. states have declared a fossil as a state symbol, and this empowers a degree of educational outreach in each of those states. We also think the inclusion of translations in Dakota (Čapa) and Ojibwe (Amik) are an excellent addition to the bill.

There is also an opportune timing here, the annual conference of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology will be held in Minneapolis this Fall. This conference gathers paleontologists from around the world to discuss the latest research, methods and educational outreach. Having the state fossil declared in time for this rare opportunity would be an extra connection we can make between Minnesota and this scientific community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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