

Testimony of Jerry & Debra Henderson

In opposition of HB 2276 as Written

Federal and State Affairs Committee March 22, 2017

Chairman Barker and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today.

My name is Debra Henderson. I am a licensed veterinary technician, in my profession for 30 years. My husband Jerry and I share our lives with 7 rescue monkeys which are all spayed and neutered. We have owned our exotic animals for over twenty years. We are a United States Department of Agriculture(USDA) licensed and regulated facility in good standing. We value our relationship with USDA to work together to provide the best care possible for our animals. We currently provide an educational program at our facility for Dr. David Seibel at the Johnson County Community College, Zoology class biannually. It has become part of the curriculum for the past twenty years in Dr. Seibel's class room and we have been told by him the highlight of his student's class.

There are many special interest "animal" groups who try to paint a very false and negative picture of private exotic animal owners by making us look uneducated about the animals in our care. I would like to define who Kansas's responsible exotic animal owners truly are. We are responsible exotic animal owners who have spent years of research, resources, time and effort to make sure the animals in our care have everything they need to live a healthy life in captivity. We are compassionate individuals who go to great lengths to assure our animals have the proper environment, diet, and enrichment along with the physical and mental care to allow them a long and healthy life.

We as responsible exotic animal keepers are members of organizations for the betterment of the animals who share our lives. Organizations like Uniting A Politically Proactive Exotic Animal League (UAPPEAL) were created to further the social welfare of wild and other "termed" exotic pets in captivity. We consult with primatologists, epidemiologists, zoologists, and veterinarians to help us provide the best care available to our animals.

Special "animal" interest groups want you to believe there are huge numbers of dangerous exotics, with the potential to significantly harm human life kept in the care of private individuals. The statistics are grossly exaggerated as they try to prove the negative stigma of private exotic ownership. We feel these groups have not educated

themselves to the differences in the primate species. Great Apes (Chimpanzees, Orangutans, etc) versus the reality that most of us keep monkeys (Capuchins, Macaques, etc) that are no larger than dogs and cats. I feel it is important to note that these animals that we care for were not displaced from the wild. They have been bred, born and raised in captivity for many, many years and deserve the best care we can offer them.

We support well thought out, common sense regulations that ensure public safety and animal welfare, however, we oppose having certain non-human primates on this bill(i.e. capuchins, macaques, baboons, and other smaller prosimians that pose no threat to humans when properly cared for by following the USDA guidelines and requirements of caging and housing) and a ban on future ownership. This will only punish responsible owners that follow the law, but mostly to provide animals in our care future companionship if necessary. Irresponsible ownership should be evaluated, addressed and eliminated. We ask that you please do not create laws that have unintended long term consequences for responsible owners and our animals, as we as responsible owners are dedicated to the welfare of our animals and public safety.

The revisions as written are almost impossible to follow and are redundant to those of us already following USDA guidelines and regulations for our animals. (Caging, escape protocol, etc) To be charged additional permit and inspection fees on top of the fees we already pay to USDA will cause more unmitigated expense that could go toward the animals we care for. Acquiring liability insurance in the state of Kansas is not possible and has to be purchased out of state at exorbitant costs, which once again take away our resources to provide better care for the animals we keep. Those of us who are licensed and in good standing and abide by the regulations of USDA should be exempt from the further fees and inspections. Current inspections could be forwarded to the proper local animal control authority if this becomes necessary.

We do agree with background checks of private owners to make sure that abuse is not occurring to the animals for financial gain, which paints a negative light for all of us with exotic animals in our care.

We and fellow exotic animal owners welcome the opportunity to work with you to create regulations for exotic animal ownership without causing unintended consequences to those of us that are responsible and dedicated owners. We want to achieve a common goal of sound animal husbandry and exceptional safety measures.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opposition to HB 2276 as written. I welcome any questions or concerns you may have.

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Our Concerns with HB2276 as Written

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No Exemptions for USDA licenses

HB 2276 as written is redundant and will add unnecessary cost to the state and animal owners. There are already federally mandated by USDA proven standards relating to operations, health, husbandry and caging in place.

Ban of acquiring new animals

HB 2276 as written will not allow for replacement companionship animals to be added to a facility for the health and welfare of an existing primate when one dies. This is covered in USDA handbook (3.81, page 77) requiring primates environment enhancement to promote psychological well-being by providing a companion.

***Ban of allowing USDA facilities to maintain primate numbers and to sell to other licenses and outside the state as long as no felony convictions.**

HB 2276 as written will not allow once again for replacement companionship for existing animals in our care if needed. It is a requirement of USDA (as stated in previous point) is a requirement to promote over all health and psychological well-being of captive primates.

Requiring micro-chipping of primate

HB 2276 states micro-chip as a requirement, once again expensive and unnecessary repeat of already USDA recommended requirement.

Requiring Notification of movement of animal to local animal control

HB 2276 requires notification of movement of animals. We as responsible primate owners would not be moving our animals unless it is for their health or welfare. It is very stressful to take them out of their known environment. This is unnecessary and time consuming.

Requires sending primate to a specific facility versus choosing the correct placement for that animal for the animals long term psychological health and well-being

HB 2276 would not allow the current caretaker of this primate to place this animal where it can receive the best care for its temperament and over all well-being. The current caretaker will know and understand the specific needs of this animal and the best placement for it better than anyone. It has been proven that placing a beloved family primate in a sterile sanctuary facility can be detrimental to not only their physical health but devastating to their psychological well-being and possibly fatal.

Reporting to local animal control

HB 2276 requires notification to local animal control of caging barriers and disease issues, . This once again is redundant and covered under USDA guidelines(3.75-3.81 page 72-77) and requirements and will cause more unmitigated costs to the state and therefore unnecessary.

30 days to reach compliance standards

HB 2276 agrees with the USDA standards of compliance but states that animal will be taken into custody if compliance issues are not met and placed in an exempt facility. Unless animal is being harmed or there is detriment to the animals health and welfare the current caretaker should have right to chose where this animal is relocated to if this becomes necessary.

Transportation notification

HB 2276 requires notification of state veterinarian for transportation of animal. Some caretakers take their primates to veterinarians out of state that specialize in non-human primate care. With illness or injury a 48-72 hour notification would not be possible and would prevent animal from getting the needed care.

Grandfathering requirements

USDA facilities should be exempt. HB 2766 as written is redoing what is already being required(inspections, caging, contact, care, etc) by USDA compliant facilities adding additional and unnecessary costs to caretakers and the state of Kansas.