

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 14, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior and Environment
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior and Environment
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior and Environment
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior and Environment
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Chair Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, Chair McCollum, and Ranking Member Joyce:

Every day, our nation's accredited zoos and aquariums care for hundreds of thousands of animals and provide critical services in support of federal wildlife conservation goals. Unfortunately, these institutions are facing an unprecedented economic crisis due to COVID-19 that is putting them and their crucial work in jeopardy. Without much needed assistance soon, many of these important institutions are at risk of closing permanently. Given the increasing risks to these institutions and hundreds of tourism-driven economies nationwide, we request urgent action to include targeted relief for accredited zoos and aquariums in the next COVID-19 legislative package.

Zoos and aquariums drive economic activity, play a critical role in our communities, and provide important services to the federal government. Importantly, these institutions contribute professional capacity and resources to care for, rescue, breed and relocate protected, endangered and threatened species in support of federal wildlife recovery goals. Zoos and aquariums take this responsibility seriously with a lifelong commitment to rescued animals, but the COVID-19 pandemic is quickly eroding their ability to do this life-saving work.

As the COVID-19 crisis evolved this year, nearly all zoos and aquariums nationwide closed to adhere to state mandates and protect public health. While some institutions have reopened on a limited basis, necessary COVID-19 operating restrictions and the loss of peak season visitation have resulted in

staggering revenue losses – in some cases institutions are losing millions of dollars per month. Zoos and aquariums are uniquely vulnerable because, unlike many other business entities, they must provide ongoing care for hundreds of thousands of animals. Today, some institutions face the potential of permanent closure and an uncertain future for their animals that cannot be easily transferred to other zoos and aquariums that face similar economic challenges. This challenge extends to animals that have been confiscated at borders and ports, federally protected species, and other animals that are owned by the federal government. Typically, this care is almost entirely funded by guests and ticket sales, which are now nonexistent or severely reduced.

In recent months, Congress passed important provisions to stabilize small businesses and nonprofits through the CARES Act and other subsequent COVID-19 relief legislation. However, to date, many accredited zoos and aquariums have been entirely left out and unable to access needed relief. In particular, relief legislation has not considered animal care costs and many zoos and aquariums are not eligible for relief loans, or the loans require institutions to take on additional debt as they continue to lose money each day.

In order to ensure that zoos and aquariums can maintain essential animal care and continue to serve as important partners in support of the federal government’s wildlife recovery and conservation work, we urge you to provide targeted relief to accredited zoos and aquariums in the next COVID-19 relief legislation. Specifically, we request \$250 million to be administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to provide emergency operating grants for accredited zoos and aquariums with an established record of partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and/or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in conserving endangered, threatened and other federally protected species. Grant funding should support facility operational costs necessary to ensure the continued viability of these institutions during the pandemic (March 2020 through December 2020).

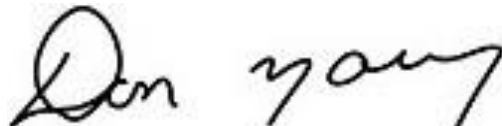
Nationwide zoos and aquariums are economic drivers in our communities and are trusted sources of innovative education, scientific research, and wildlife conservation. These institutions are critical partners with the federal government in caring for protected species and supporting conservation. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in major economic hardship, and we request that you include targeted relief for zoos and aquariums in the next COVID-19 legislative package.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



Don Young
Member of Congress

/s/
Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

/s/
Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

/s/
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

/s/
Cedric L. Richmond
Member of Congress

/s/
Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress

/s/
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

/s/
Garret Graves
Member of Congress

/s/
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

/s/
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

/s/
Daniel W. Lipinski
Member of Congress

/s/
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

/s/
Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

/s/
Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

/s/
Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

/s/
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

/s/
Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress

/s/
Bill Foster
Member of Congress

/s/
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/
Elaine G. Luria
Member of Congress

/s/
Jim Costa
Member of Congress

/s/
Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

/s/
Joe Cunningham
Member of Congress

/s/
Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

/s/
Peter T. King
Member of Congress

/s/
Salud O. Carbajal
Member of Congress

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Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

/s/
Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

/s/
Adam Smith
Member of Congress

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Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

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Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

/s/
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

/s/
Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

/s/
Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

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John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

/s/
Ann Wagner
Member of Congress

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Jefferson Van Drew
Member of Congress

/s/
Harley Rouda
Member of Congress

/s/
Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress

/s/
Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress

/s/
Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress

/s/
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

/s/
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress

/s/
Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

/s/
Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

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Joe Courtney
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Ann McLane Kuster
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Suzan K. DelBene
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Raúl M. Grijalva
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Mike Levin
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Deb Haaland
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Ayanna Pressley
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Danny K. Davis
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Robin L. Kelly
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Linda T. Sánchez
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Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

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Justin Amash
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James P. McGovern
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Brian Higgins
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Wm. Lacy Clay
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André Carson
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John P. Sarbanes
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Earl Blumenauer
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Charlie Crist
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José E. Serrano
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Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress

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Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

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Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/
John Katko
Member of Congress

/s/
Denny Heck
Member of Congress

/s/
TJ Cox
Member of Congress

/s/
Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

/s/
Max Rose
Member of Congress

/s/
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/
Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress

/s/
Anthony Brindisi
Member of Congress