



Animal Welfare Institute

900 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20003
awionline.org phone: (202) 337-2332 fax: (202) 446-2131

February 20, 2024

Representative Judy Aron, Chair
House Environment and Agriculture Committee
The General Court of New Hampshire
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH

Dear Chair Aron, Vice Chair Creighton, and members of the House Environment and Agriculture Committee:

On behalf of the Animal Welfare Institute, a national nonprofit animal advocacy organization, and our hundreds of New Hampshire members, I want to express our opposition to H1325-FN, which would allow the private ownership of “small tailed monkeys,” raccoons, foxes, otters, skunks, and kangaroos. The bill threatens the welfare of animals and the safety of the public. Furthermore, it sets an alarming precedent as it rolls back commonsense restrictions on exotic pet ownership, and may lead to the proposal of additional exemptions for the private ownership of other dangerous wild animals.

Keeping wild animals as pets threatens public safety. For instance, the media reports that newborns in Michigan and Texas have been attacked by pet raccoons, and with one child requiring facial reconstructive surgery. Kangaroos, whose kicks can kill a human, have escaped from U.S. homes multiple times, requiring extended police chases to recapture them. While “small tailed monkeys” is not a scientific classification, there have been innumerable dangerous incidents involving pet primates. Over the past few decades, hundreds of people in the U.S. have reported being injured by captive primates, and many more incidents likely go unreported. One case that gained worldwide attention occurred in 2009, when a Connecticut woman named Charla Nash was blinded and lost most of her face and hands after being attacked by her neighbor’s pet chimpanzee, Travis. Additionally, nonhuman primates pose distinct risks to public health since they can easily transmit a wide range of viral, bacterial, parasitic, and fungal diseases to humans, including yellow fever, monkey pox, Ebola and Marburg virus, viral hepatitis, measles, Herpes simian (Herpes B), and Simian Immunodeficiency Virus. Even one dangerous incident involving an exotic pet is one too many, and neither communities nor first responders should have to deal with the threat of these escaped wild animals.

Furthermore, it is cruel to keep wild animals as pets. They have natural instincts and behaviors that are ill-adapted to life in captivity, and it is virtually impossible for a private owner to satisfy their psychological and social needs. Exotic pets often endure abusive conditions that may include small cages, tethering, and physical mutilation such as tooth or gland extraction to “tame” them. They usually cannot engage in natural behaviors, and are deprived of fulfilling interactions with other members of their species. Exotic pets are usually adopted as cute and docile infants, but when they mature and become too difficult to handle, they are often confined in isolation or simply turned loose, endangering the local community and nearby wildlife.

Laws at the state and local level are crucial to end this exploitation and to protect communities from these animals that do not belong in homes. The current restrictions on exotic pet ownership in New Hampshire should be a point of pride for the state, and I hope you will reject this effort to weaken them. I urge the committee to oppose H1325-FN, and I appreciate your consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kate Dylewsky". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid.

Kate Dylewsky
Assistant Director, Government Affairs
Animal Welfare Institute
(202) 446-2142
kate@awionline.org