August 6, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Leader
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer, Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, McCarthy and Schumer,

The nation’s accredited aquariums and zoos are facing an unprecedented economic crisis. Each day these facilities care for animals and collaborate to save species from extinction, but necessary COVID-19 operating restrictions have put them and their crucial work in jeopardy. Zoos and aquariums are uniquely vulnerable because, unlike many other business entities, they must provide ongoing care for hundreds of thousands of animals. The animals cannot be furloughed. Therefore, our members must continue to pay the high fixed costs of animal care with little to no opportunity to earn revenue while absorbing monthly operating losses that in some cases run into the millions of dollars. As this crisis extends, some zoos and aquariums are facing the prospect of permanent closure. All of our member facilities have incredibly difficult choices ahead of them. We need Congress’s immediate help.

As mission driven organizations, the majority of our zoos and aquariums continue to shoulder the costs of caring for, rescuing, breeding, and relocating endangered or threatened species, many of which are the responsibility of or owned by the federal government. Animal rescue is a lifelong commitment; once we rescue an animal, that animal is our responsibility for its entire life. We are proud and honored to do this work; however, our ability to continue this life-saving work is diminishing with each day and week.

Congress has provided several mechanisms to stabilize businesses and small nonprofits in previous COVID relief legislation and recent proposals. However, as currently written, many aquariums and zoos are not eligible, animal care costs have not been considered, or relief programs have required public and nonprofit zoos and aquariums to take on additional debt as they continue lose money each day.

As you consider additional coronavirus economic relief legislation, I urge you to provide critical aid to save zoos and aquariums including:

**Forgivable Loans.** Protect nonprofit and public zoos and aquariums of all sizes from significant debt, compounding job losses, and permanent closures by providing access to forgivable loans large enough to stabilize operations. Congress can do this by making the legislative changes necessary to ensure the
Main Street Lending Program provides forgivable loans and the Paycheck Protection Program offers increased access to relief for all zoos and aquariums as follows:

1. **Main Street Lending Program:** Amend Section 4003 (c)(3)(D) of the CARES Act to:
   - i. Require the Federal Reserve to offer a facility designed for all nonprofits that includes loan forgiveness for loans sufficiently sized to stabilize operations and protect against permanent closures; and
   - ii. Eliminate the requirement that no more than 30% of an organization’s 2019 revenues come from donations.

2. **Paycheck Protection Program:** Sufficiently expand funding and amend the program to enable a second round of loans and modify the eligibility criteria to allow all nonprofit zoos and aquariums, regardless of size, to be eligible for forgivable loans.

**Emergency Grants.** Provide federal grants to help aquariums and zoos cover day-to-day animal care costs, including ongoing expenses to rescue, rehabilitate, and care for endangered and rescued wildlife for which the government is responsible under federal law and regulation:

1. Allocate at least $6 billion to provide emergency operating grants for more than 30,000 government and nonprofit aquariums, zoos, and museums or provide commensurate emergency funding for animal care for accredited aquariums and zoos. Such grants could be administered under authorities held by relevant federal agencies through either: (1) the Institute of Museum and Library Services or (2) the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF); and

2. Allocate sufficient funds for U.S.-based Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited aquariums and zoos specifically for the care of endangered and threatened species or otherwise federally protected or owned animals whose welfare/protection falls under the jurisdiction of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

**State and Local Funding.** Provide additional stabilization through direct and flexible relief to state and local municipalities to support economic recovery that includes a targeted allocation of funding for government operated and supported aquariums and zoos.

Americans count on aquariums and zoos as tourism hubs that help drive local and regional economies. They are also trusted sources of information, innovative education, scientific expertise, and wildlife conservation. Our aquariums and zoos are irreplaceable cornerstones in their communities, facing unique and dire challenges during this crisis. We respectfully request that the next COVID-19 legislative package include solutions for aquariums and zoos, specifically forgivable loans and emergency relief, to survive the months ahead.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and your work to respond to and recover from this pandemic.

Sincerely,

Dan Ashe
President and CEO

Cc:
The Honorable Members of the U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Members of the U.S. Senate
U.S. AZA-accredited Facilities:

Alabama
Birmingham Zoo

Alaska
Alaska SeaLife Center

Arizona
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
OdySea Aquarium
Phoenix Zoo
Reid Park Zoo
SEA LIFE Arizona Aquarium

Arkansas
Little Rock Zoo

California
Aquarium of the Bay
Aquarium of the Pacific
Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography
Cabrillo Marine Aquarium
California Science Center
Charles Paddock Zoo
CuriOdyssey
Fresno Chaffee Zoo
Happy Hollow Zoo
The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens
Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens
Monterey Bay Aquarium
Oakland Zoo
Sacramento Zoo
Safari West Wildlife Preserve
San Diego Zoo
San Diego Zoo Safari Park
San Francisco Zoological Gardens
Santa Barbara Zoological Gardens
SEA LIFE Carlsbad Aquarium at Legoland
SeaWorld San Diego
Sequoia Park Zoo
Steinhart Aquarium

Colorado
Butterfly Pavilion
Cheyenne Mountain Zoo
Denver Zoo
Landry's Downtown Aquarium - Denver
Pueblo Zoo

Connecticut
Connecticut's Beardsleys Zoo
The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk

District of Columbia
Smithsonian National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute

Florida
Brevard Zoo
Busch Gardens Tampa Bay
Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens
Discovery Cove
Disney's Animal Kingdom
The Florida Aquarium
Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens
Lion Country Safari
Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium
Naples Zoo
Palm Beach Zoo & Conservation Society
Santa Fe College Teaching Zoo
SEA LIFE Orlando Aquarium
SeaWorld Orlando
St. Augustine Alligator Farm
The Seas at Epcot
Zoo Miami
ZooTampa at Lowry Park

Georgia
Georgia Aquarium
Zoo Atlanta

Hawaii
Honolulu Zoo

Idaho
Idaho Falls Zoo at Tautphaus Park
Zoo Boise

Illinois
Chicago Zoological Society - Brookfield Zoo
Cosley Zoo
John G. Shedd Aquarium
Lincoln Park Zoo
Miller Park Zoo
Peoria Zoo
Scovill Zoo

Indiana
Fort Wayne Children's Zoo
Indianapolis Zoological Society, Inc.
Mesker Park Zoo & Botanic Garden
Potawatomi Zoo
Iowa
Blank Park Zoo
National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium

Kansas
David Traylor Zoo of Emporia
Hutchinson Zoo
Lee Richardson Zoo
Rolling Hills Zoo
Sedgwick County Zoo
Sunset Zoological Park
Topeka Zoo & Conservation Center

Kentucky
Louisville Zoological Garden
Newport Aquarium

Louisiana
Alexandria Zoological Park
Audubon Aquarium of the Americas
Audubon Zoo

Maryland
The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore
National Aquarium

Massachusetts
Buttonwood Park Zoo
Capron Park Zoo
Franklin Park Zoo
Museum of Science
New England Aquarium
Walter D. Stone Memorial Zoo

Michigan
Binder Park Zoo
Detroit Zoo
John Ball Zoo
Potter Park Zoological Gardens
Saginaw Children’s Zoo
SEA LiFE Michigan Aquarium

Minnesota
Como Park Zoo and Conservatory
Lake Superior Zoo
Minnesota Zoological Garden

Missouri
The Butterfly House
Dickerson Park Zoo
Endangered Wolf Center
Kansas City Zoo
Saint Louis Zoo
SEA LiFE Kansas City Aquarium

Montana
Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center
ZooMontana

Nebraska
Lee G. Simmons Conservation Park & Wildlife Safari
Lincoln Children's Zoo
Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium
Riverside Discovery Center

Nevada
Shark Reef Aquarium at Mandalay Bay

New Hampshire
Squam Lakes Natural Science Center

New Jersey
Adventure Aquarium
Bergen County Zoological Park
Cape May County Park Zoo
Jenkinson’s Aquarium
Turtle Back Zoo

New Mexico
Albuquerque Biological Park
Living Desert Zoo & Gardens State Park

New York
Aquarium of Niagara
Bronx Zoo
Buffalo Zoo
Central Park Zoo
New York Aquarium
Prospect Park Zoo
Queens Zoo
Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park
Seneca Park Zoo
Staten Island Zoo
Trevor Zoo
Utica Zoo

North Carolina
Greensboro Science Center
Museum of Life and Science
North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher
North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores
North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island
North Carolina Zoo
SEA LIFE Charlotte-Concord Aquarium
Western North Carolina Nature Center

North Dakota
Chahinkapa Zoo
Dakota Zoo
Red River Zoo
Roosevelt Park Zoo

Ohio
African Safari Wildlife Park
Akron Zoological Park
Boonshoft Museum of Discovery
Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden
Cleveland Metroparks Zoo
Columbus Zoo and Aquarium
The Wilds
Toledo Zoo & Aquarium

Oklahoma
Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Garden
Tulsa Zoo

Oregon
Oregon Coast Aquarium
Oregon Zoo
Wildlife Safari

Pennsylvania
Clyde Peeling's Reptiland
Elmwood Park Zoo
Erie Zoo
Lehigh Valley Zoo
National Aviary
Philadelphia Zoo
ZOOAMERICA North American Wildlife Park

Rhode Island
Roger Williams Park Zoo

South Carolina
Brookgreen Gardens
Greenville Zoo
Ripley's Aquarium in Myrtle Beach
Riverbanks Zoo & Garden
South Carolina Aquarium
Turtle Survival Center

South Dakota
Bramble Park Zoo
Great Plains Zoo & Delbridge Museum of Natural History

Tennessee
Chattanooga Zoo at Warner Park
Memphis Zoo
Nashville Zoo, Inc.
Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies
Tennessee Aquarium

Zoo Knoxville

Texas
Abilene Zoological Gardens
Caldwell Zoo
Cameron Park Zoo
The Dallas World Aquarium
Dallas Zoo
El Paso Zoo
Ellen Trout Zoo
Fort Worth Zoo
Fossil Rim Wildlife Center
Gladys Porter Zoo
Houston Zoo, Inc.
Landry's Houston Aquarium, Inc.
Rainforest & Aquarium at Moody Gardens, Inc.
San Antonio Zoological Society
SEA LIFE Grapevine Aquarium
SeaWorld San Antonio
Texas State Aquarium

Utah
Loveland Living Planet Aquarium
Tracy Aviary
Utah's Hogle Zoo

Virginia
Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center
Virginia Living Museum
Virginia Zoological Park

Washington
Northwest Trek Wildlife Park
Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium
Seattle Aquarium
Woodland Park Zoo

West Virginia
Oglebay's Good Zoo

Wisconsin
Henry Vilas Zoo
International Crane Foundation
Milwaukee County Zoological Gardens
Northeastern Wisconsin (NEW) Zoo
Racine Zoo