



MINNESOTA ZOO®

SENT VIA EMAIL

John Frawley, Minnesota Zoo Director
13000 Zoo Boulevard
Apple Valley, MN 55124

April 13, 2021

Representative Fue Lee
485 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Fue Lee:

I am writing in support of appropriations for the Zoo in HF 337, the omnibus 2021 bonding bill, which fund projects that are critical for the Zoo's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you know, the Minnesota Zoo is a unique state agency. As a state agency who generates 2/3 of its own revenue, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a lot of hardship for the organization. Zoo closures and dramatically reduced capacities resulted in the Zoo needing to take drastic non-salary budget measures to sustain its operation; including suspension of contracts and RFPs where feasible, halting or delaying all major projects except those funded by asset preservation, and freezing expenditures. And, unfortunately, in May 2020 – the Zoo was forced to lay off 48 staff with an additional 77 positions impacted by way of demotion or reduction of hours. These staffing changes affected 33% of the Zoo's total workforce.

While these measures have helped reduce costs by nearly \$8 million in FY 2020-21, concern remains over the ability to maintain Zoo facilities and the Zoo's 42-year old campus, which is why we are writing in support of HF 337; the omnibus 2021 bonding bill.

The funding in this bill (HF 337) is critical to ensuring we can continue to serve Minnesota. Without the funding provided in the bill, we do not have a way to renovate our animal hospital, which predates the Zoo. A 43-year old animal hospital prevents the Zoo from meeting industry standards required for the animals in our care. We also are not able to reopen our Nocturnal Trail, which has sat closed to the public for more than a decade. And further, without this funding – the Zoo is unable to address deferred maintenance which is compounded due to revenue shortfalls as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding recommended within HF 337 is a critical piece of the Zoo's recovery and ability to rebuild as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you, Mr. Chair and Committee members, for your continued support of the Minnesota Zoo.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Frawley', written in a cursive style.

John Frawley

CC: Representative Fue Lee, Chair
Representative Mary Murphy, Vice Chair
Representative Dean Urdahl, Republican Lead
Senator Thomas Bakk, Chair, Senate Capital Investment Committee
Representative Robert Bierman
Representative John Huot
Senator Greg Clausen
Jenny Nash, Committee Administrator