



Date: February 8, 2022

Bill: SB 381 – Natural Resources – Wildlife Trafficking Prevention

Position: Favorable with Amendment

Dear Chair Pinsky and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable with amendments report for **Senate Bill 381 - Natural Resources – Wildlife Trafficking Prevention**, which will further protect vulnerable species, including sea turtles. We are seeking the following amendment to be introduced by the sponsor on page 3, line 6:

(B) “BONA FIDE SCIENTIFIC OR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION” MEANS AN INSTITUTION THAT ESTABLISHES EDUCATIONAL OR SCIENTIFIC TAX-EXEMPT STATUS THROUGH DOCUMENTATION FROM THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE; OR A ZOO OR AQUARIUM THAT PROVIDES EDUCATIONAL OR SCIENTIFIC SERVICES AND THAT IS ACCREDITED BY THE ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS”.

The proposed amendment expands the definition of a scientific or educational institution to include a zoo or aquarium that provides educational or scientific services and is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). This change ensures the National Aquarium is properly classified as educational institution and allows the continued use of legally obtained animal artifacts in our education programs. Additionally, this change ensures AZA institutions are still able to exchange educational resources between institutions.

Saving wildlife and habitats is one of the National Aquarium’s three strategic conservation goals, so we appreciate that this bill will prohibit the intrastate purchasing, selling, offering for sale, or possessing with the intent to sell certain parts or products of vulnerable animal species. Specifically, the bill would apply to all six endangered or threatened sea turtle species found in U.S. waters.

Since 1991, the National Aquarium has operated a sea turtle stranding response and rehabilitation program and is the only organization permitted to respond to live-stranded sea turtles in the State of Maryland. The National Aquarium is also involved in several efforts to increase support for sea turtle conservation, including AZA’s Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE) Sea Turtle program. Illegal wildlife trafficking undercuts the efforts of dedicated institutions working throughout our state, country and around the world to protect species like sea turtles from extinction.

By passing SB 381, Maryland will join a growing list of states taking action in their jurisdiction to support the global effort to prevent illegal wildlife trafficking. **We urge the Committee to issue a favorable with amendments report on SB 381.**

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