



March 23, 2026

**Subject: Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 53**

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mindy Patterson, and I am the President and Co-Founder of The Cavalry Group, a national member-based organization dedicated to protecting the constitutional and private property rights of law-abiding animal owners, breeders, exhibitors, and agricultural professionals across the United States. I submit this testimony on behalf of our members in Maryland in strong opposition to House Bill 53, and respectfully urge this Committee to give the bill an unfavorable report.

House Bill 53 seeks to expand criminal prohibitions on the ownership of certain species, including kangaroos, wallabies, wallaroos, and zebras, under the premise of protecting public safety. However, there is no documented evidence in Maryland demonstrating that these animals pose a threat to public safety. The animals identified in this bill have not been involved in incidents that would justify such sweeping restrictions.

Public policy, particularly when it involves criminal prohibitions, should be grounded in evidence and necessity. In this case, the justification for HB53 rests on hypothetical concerns rather than documented incidents. Maryland already has laws in place that allow authorities to address legitimate issues involving animal welfare or public safety when they arise. Expanding prohibitions without a demonstrated need is unnecessary and excessive.

Equally concerning is the precedent this bill sets. HB53 moves Maryland toward banning the ownership of animals not because they have caused harm, but because they are perceived as capable of doing so. If the standard for prohibition becomes theoretical risk rather than documented concern, it opens the door for future restrictions on additional species that are responsibly and safely managed today.



The bill's exemption for USDA-licensed facilities raises further practical and ethical concerns. Many responsible animal owners and exhibitors maintain USDA licenses and operate under federal oversight. However, circumstances change. If a license is relinquished, expires, or is no longer required for a particular operation, the owner could suddenly find themselves in violation of state law, despite having lawfully and responsibly cared for their kangaroos, wallabies, wallaroos, and/or zebras.

This creates a situation where animals themselves are placed at risk. Owners could be forced into untenable decisions regarding the future of their animals that have been properly cared for, not because of misconduct, but because of a change in licensing status. Legislation that claims to promote public safety should not inadvertently create instability for animals in responsible and dedicated care.

The focus of public policy should be on responsible ownership and enforcement of existing laws, not broad prohibitions that penalize compliant individuals. The Cavalry Group represents members who are deeply committed to animal welfare, regulatory compliance, and public safety. These are not individuals operating outside the law. They are conscientious stewards who should not be subject to unnecessary criminal restrictions.

In closing, the premise of HB53 is fundamentally flawed. The claim that this legislation is necessary to protect public safety is not supported by evidence. Without a demonstrated problem, expanding criminal prohibitions is neither justified nor sensible.

For these reasons, and on behalf of our members in Maryland, I respectfully urge the Committee to give House Bill 53 an unfavorable vote.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mindy Patterson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mindy Patterson  
President & Co-Founder  
The Cavalry Group, LLC