



**Filed Testimony of
Donald P. Hutchinson, President & CEO
The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore**

**House Appropriations Capital Budget Subcommittee
Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Hearing**

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is grateful for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Fiscal Year 2012 capital budget request of \$2.5 million for a variety of improvement projects that are necessary for life safety improvements, basic infrastructure, strategic services, and exhibit improvements. We understand that this is one of the most difficult years ever for capital funding and that your deliberations must take into account the highest and best use of those limited dollars. The vital repairs and improvements that this \$2.5 million will fund are for the protection, safety, welfare, and preservation of our animals, a worthy commitment of funds.

The Maryland Zoo is a 135-year old institution that has expanded over the years. The Zoo now occupies 45 of our 135 acres. Maintenance of the Zoo's facilities is an ongoing expense, as well as necessary to continue to meet United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requirements (our regulatory agency) and Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) standards. Failure to meet USDA standards could result in immediate closure of the facility. If the Zoo does not continue to make improvements to its physical plant, correct outstanding problems, perform proper upkeep, and address new problems as they arise, our next AZA accreditation in 2012 could be in serious jeopardy. While the Zoo anticipates that all matters that the AZA cited in the last accreditation review will have been addressed before next year's inspection, staff is always cognizant that something of negative significance could occur in the meantime that would require the availability of funds to correct immediately. State capital dollars are critical to our success in this regard.

The Department of Legislative Services analysis has recommended that \$1.5 million of this request, an amount that was to be dedicated to Phase II if the Penguin Exhibit, be deferred until Fiscal Year 2013. We would strongly urge that all \$2.5 million be awarded this year so that we could, at the very least, address other acutely needed improvements.

In 2006, the Zoo hired the Kimball Construction Company to make an assessment of the Zoo's African Journey. We have subsequently done a much broader assessment of the Zoo. As a result of this work, we have developed a comprehensive list of needed improvements. The funding requested for Fiscal Year 2012 will be essential for working on the following crucial projects:

African Watering Hole Life Support System Replacement (\$800,000)

Replacement of water filtration equipment and repair of water feature to stop leaks. This is needed in order to create a storm water system for the exhibits to keep storm water and dirt out of the pools.

Correct Life Safety Deficiencies (\$500,000)

The Zoo has identified, and continues to identify, life safety deficiencies throughout the Zoo. These deficiencies are as simple as installing GFI receptacles to protect from electrical shock to repairing structural defects. These items are driven by code, generally accepted practices, and guest complaints.

Animal Welfare Deficiencies (\$500,000)

This is required for many areas around the Zoo and includes interior painting (e.g., chimp holding, rhino/zebra barn, etc.), lightning protection for a majority of the exhibits, installation of stainless steel sinks at animal food preparation areas, storm water management in various animal areas to address flooding during heavy rains (rhino/zebra holding, etc.), replacement of rusting/deteriorating cages, and the installation of automatic water bowls.

Caging (\$200,000)

Replace and repair polar bear, hospital, and chimpanzee caging that has exceeded its life span and/or worn out sooner than expected.

Leopard Holding (\$500,000)

The leopard holding building was built in 1995 and is in generally poor condition. We plan to replace the caging, replace building service doors, improve the lighting and ventilation, and replace the food storage/preparation area. These improvements will be necessary for the Zoo to continue to meet USDA/AZA standards.

The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) analysis of the Zoo's Fiscal Year 2012 capital request requests a response to the following:

The Zoo should comment on its long-term marketing strategy, including what efforts have been made to bolster zoo attendance amongst all four visitor groups.

We are on a steady course toward greeting 370,000 visitors in Fiscal Year 2011. We anticipate attendance in Fiscal Year 2011 to meet or exceed the Fiscal Year 2010 attendance. This Fiscal Year, the Zoo remained open year-round for the first time in five years, which generated 9,500 visitors to the Zoo in January and February. We work with the Baltimore office of Weber Shandwick, a full service advertising and public relations agency, to help us promote significant awareness and visibility among the public. We use creative marketing strategies and also create events at the Zoo to draw diverse audiences. We are continually exploring new ways to promote the Zoo in the community, such as our partnership with the Baltimore Ravens football team, events at the Zoo in partnership with the business community, and our popular Breakfast with the Animals series, which sells out every time. A new Executive Vice President of Institutional Advancement with extensive experience in marketing, public relations, and tourism has been hired to assist in this effort. We post our education brochure on our website, send e-blasts to educators, and mail postcards to educators to remind our audience of our Free School Admission program and to encourage the booking of field trips.

The Zoo should discuss its future direction and financial prospects in light of recent performance and the difficult economic conditions.

- We will continue to explore creative opportunities for marketing/advertising, such as "Our Zoo is More Fun than Your Zoo."

- We continue to contact and cultivate private funding and corporations.
- We are considering an endowment campaign.
- We are working to redefine our traditional role of education by exploring additional contributions in science and math education.

The Maryland Zoological Society and the staff of The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore are extremely grateful to the state for its capital project funding and to this Committee for its long standing support. **We respectfully request that this Committee support the full funding of The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore.**