



**Filed Testimony of  
Donald P. Hutchinson, President & CEO  
The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore  
March 16, 2015**

**Senate Budget and Taxation Capital Budget Subcommittee  
Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Hearing**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is grateful for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Fiscal Year 2016 capital budget request of \$5 million for a variety of projects that are necessary for the Zoo's basic infrastructure improvements, renovations to the Elephant Exhibit to comply with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' (AZA) revised guidelines for elephant exhibits, and an upgrade and expansion of our giraffe and lion exhibits to allow for the safety of the giraffe herd and to appropriately accommodate the lion pride.

One of the strongest regional zoos in the nation, The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore occupies 45 acres of its 135 acre property located in Druid Hill Park. The Zoo is home to over 1,500 animals and is responsible for 55 buildings, including a veterinary hospital. Renewal of the Zoo's facilities is an ongoing and necessary process in order to continue to meet the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requirements (our regulatory agency) and AZA standards. Failure to meet USDA standards could result in fines and/or immediate closure of the facility. The Zoo must continue to make improvements to its physical plant, correct outstanding problems, perform proper upkeep, and address new problems as they arise to maintain our AZA accreditation. While the Zoo staff works continuously to address all matters that the AZA deems necessary for us to update, we are always cognizant that something of negative significance could occur on this mature campus that would require the availability of funds to correct immediately. State capital dollars are critical to our success in this regard.

Funding is needed to address the Zoo's basic infrastructure. The Zoo has a growing, living collection and we must adjust priorities accordingly. Projects will correct life-safety and animal welfare deficiencies to maintain our Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accreditation and allow us to continue to meet the standards of our regulatory agency, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Specific infrastructure projects include re-keying the Zoo, an emergency backup generator for animal buildings/facilities, and roof replacements. In addition, two back-of-house facilities will be improved to meet current USDA standards. The second floor of the Zoo's Commissary will be renovated to allow for dry food storage and to provide needed office space for commissary staff. The Zoo's current Grain Barn has a rotting outer wall that must be replaced and the building will be retro-fitted for new lighting, additional shelving, equipment storage, and secure storage space for the more valuable items.

Also planned are significant improvements to the holding area of the Leopard Exhibit, located in the center of African Journey. Not only does the caging need replacing, but the

roof has rotted and is leaking. This project will add an outdoor off-exhibit holding area which is needed to accommodate additional leopards. There will also be a bump-out of the public boardwalk between the leopard and cheetah exhibits for improved animal viewing.

Funding is also requested to modify several of our existing animal exhibits to create a better and safer living environment for the animals. We will finish the required changes to our elephant exhibit to bring it into compliance with the revised guidelines for elephant exhibits adopted by the AZA. This is the last of three fiscal year appropriations for this purpose.

The Zoo is asking for funding for the first year of a two-year funding period for an upgrade and expansion of our giraffe and lion exhibits. This project has moved up in priority for the Zoo due to additions to the animal collection. The Zoo's giraffe herd has a daily need to use both exhibit spaces. The larger space begins at the edge of the Giraffe House and ends at the Giraffe Feeding Station. It has panoramic viewing of the giraffe and is a wonderful experience for guests when there are two or more animals there. But because of the steep topography, this exhibit is not able to be used whenever it has rained because wet grass and mud make it unsafe for the giraffe. The possibility of slipping, tripping, or falling is high and could result in serious injury to the animals. Leveling and expanding the giraffe exhibit by eliminating the guest path so that the giraffe may move about safely becomes paramount. The birth of two lion cubs in October 2013, and the arrival of an orphaned cub in December 2013, necessitates enlarging the lion holding area. This can be accomplished by expanding the off exhibit holding area and running an elevated boardwalk through these two exhibits. While this renovation would be done primarily to improve animal welfare, its secondary purpose will be to create an opportunity to give guests an improved experience to view lions and giraffe simultaneously, one species on each side of the boardwalk.

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 the Committee support the full funding for The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore.**



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