



Dear Chairman Tyson and members of the Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation:

Over 35 years ago, my family began breeding rare and endangered species on 10 acres of land. Our success has played a crucial role in preserving several species, including clouded leopards, snow leopards, reticulated giraffes, and more. Our efforts are internationally recognized, and we work with facilities worldwide through animal management plans like the AZA's Species Survival Plans and ZAA Animal Management Plans.

Our success required expansion: geographically and financially. In 2004, we chose to open as a zoo to generate additional financial support for breeding programs. Tanganyika Wildlife Park officially opened in August of 2008. Today, we have over 500 animals and 43 successful breeding programs encompassing approximately 40 acres of land.

When we opened to the public, our land was considered mixed-use and assessed as commercial. Our property taxes increased by over \$50,000. Our land is not true commercial, and we have no plans to sell or develop it into anything other than structures for our animals and visitors. There must be changes to our property tax laws in order to not burden businesses like mine from expanding. For instance, as a response to COVID, we considered adding a drive-thru Safari Park at Tanganyika. However, our property tax for the land utilized for the Safari Park would go from several thousand dollars a year to tens of thousands of dollars a year, even though it's a pasture for animals.

Other agri-tourism businesses such as zoos, wineries, pumpkin patches, hunting ranches, etc., have also felt the burden in the state. In some instances, they can section out the commercial and agricultural pieces. In other cases, like us, that is not feasible. This is an oversight that I have learned can only be addressed at the state level. The county's hands are tied, and this legislation would allow the county to look at cases like mine individually.

Agri-tourism is a vital part of tourism in Kansas. Assessing the land of agricultural organizations that attempt to bring tourism dollars to our state by adding new services or directly selling products to visitors is an unfair burden they should not have to face. It is also adversely affecting the growth of agri-tourism, thereby limiting tourism in Kansas as a whole.

I hope you will choose to support Kansas Tourism's efforts to grow agri-tourism in our terrific state by supporting SB 554. Ultimately, tourism is a rising tide that raises all ships.

Sincerely,

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