

Written Testimony in opposition to HB 2297

My Name is Susan Cunningham, I live in Wichita Ks. I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed HB 2297 the "raccoon bill." I am concerned about the negative consequences of allowing wild animals like raccoons to be kept as pets or kept for breeding purposes.

Since I live on the bank of the Little Arkansas River and across the river from a 7 acre designated wild area park (Mead Island) I have experience dealing with sick and occasionally aggressive raccoons. Since they are territorial in urban settings, they become aggressive when accustomed to consistent food sources, especially where people feed their pets outdoors.

I have also had significant damage to my roof, and the expense of hiring professionals to remove them from my attic.

The bill fails to outline a clear or legal process for acquiring a raccoon, raising significant concerns about oversight and the potential for illegal wildlife trade.

Creating pets out of wild animals is inherently cruel. Raccoons have complex needs that cannot be adequately met in a domestic environment. They require specialized diets, extensive space, and opportunities to engage in natural behaviors like foraging and climbing. Confining them to cages or even a home environment is detrimental to their physical and psychological well-being.

Furthermore, the public health risks associated with raccoon ownership are significant. Raccoons are known carriers of numerous diseases, including rabies, distemper, and parasites like roundworm and leptospirosis. According to the CDC, raccoons are among the highest wild animals testing positive for rabies. The potential for disease transmission to humans and domestic animals is a serious concern. These risks are far greater than with typical domesticated animals.

If this bill passes, you should know that Wichita's animal control department is already under-resourced and facing budget constraints. They will be ill-equipped to handle the inevitable issues that will arise from this bill, including ensuring fascinations, investigating reports of neglect, abuse, and escaped raccoons. Licensing compliance is notoriously low and so is enforcement. Managing the consequences of this bill regarding regulations will be expensive if not impossible.

This bill is ill-conceived and poses a threat to both animal welfare and public health. I urge you to vote against it.

Sincerely,

Susan Cunningham

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