



UNITED STATES HERPETOCULTURE ALLIANCE, INC.
Conservation Through Captive Breeding

May 13, 2014

Erika N. Chen-Walsh
Testimony In Support Of SB 902

Chairman Verschoore, Vice Chairman Costello, Republican Spokesman Moffitt and members of the House Agriculture and Conservation Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit this written testimony for you today.

I am the Chairperson of the DuPage County Bar Association Animal Law Committee, a member of the Illinois State Bar Association Animal Law Section and the President of the United States Herpetoculture Association (the "Herp Alliance"). The Herp Alliance is a non profit conservation and educational organization, incorporated in Illinois whose important guiding principles include education, conservation (particularly through captive breeding), and rescue operations of captive reptiles and amphibians. We represent in excess of 25,000 supporters globally, with hundreds here in the State of Illinois.

Illinois Senate Bill 902 is the first of its kind in this country in that it seeks to establish a separate section of Illinois Code regulating all issues regarding reptiles and amphibians. We do this already for other types of animals such as horses, and it makes sense for Illinois to do this here.

SB 902 has wide support within the State from trade show organizers, zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, reptile and amphibian rescue organizations, veterinarians, private breeders, pet store owners, pet owners and the public.

SB 902 will enhance public safety.

In the history of Illinois, there has only been a single documented incident involving a human injury from a captive reptile (1999). However, SB 902 imposes caging requirements and management practices on all keepers of constrictor snakes and other appropriate species. These management practices will enhance public safety by establishing standards appropriate for the species.

SB 902 establishes a permit system for the keeping of limited venomous animals and certain monitor lizards and requires liability insurance covering those animals.

Perhaps most importantly, SB 902 imposes strict liability on all reptile and amphibian keepers for incidents arising out of the keeping of such animals. Illinois has a similar legislation in place for equines. This is not onerous. It simply provides a legal requirement for individuals to be financially responsible for any of these animals that they keep.

SB 902 will also protect the animals.

The caging, education and care requirements for limited venomous reptiles and monitor lizards provide a sound basis for good animal husbandry to allow qualified people to work with these special animals.

SB 902 is good for Illinois Business.

The reptile industry in Illinois generates approximately \$25 million in revenues for our state. These revenues are derived from sales of dry goods and pet supply products, reptile shows and conventions (the largest in this country is held in Illinois every year), veterinary care, and the sale of animals.

The reptile industry employs individuals, supports small Illinois businesses and supplements the income of thousands of Illinois families.

SB 902 protects the industries that generate that income for Illinois. It protects the right of private keepers to responsibly keep reptiles and amphibians in this state and allows these thriving small businesses to continue to grow and operate.

SB 902 reduces bureaucracy.

By placing all reptile and amphibians under the umbrella of a single statute, SB 902 simplifies enforcement of all issues concerning these animals.

In summary, SB 902 is good for the Illinois public; it is good for the animals; it is good for Illinois business, and it simplifies enforcement of Illinois law. SB 902 is good for Illinois.

Sincerely,



Erika N. Chen-Walsh
President,
US Herpetoculture Alliance