## Congress of the United States Washington, DC 20515

December 15, 2023

The Honorable Glenn Thompson Chairman House Agriculture Committee United States House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 The Honorable David Scott Ranking Member House Agriculture Committee United State House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Scott:

As cosponsors of Goldie's Act (H.R. 1788), we respectfully request that this legislation be included in the upcoming Farm Bill to ensure that the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) is adequately enforced. Passed nearly 60 years ago, the AWA remains the primary federal statute governing the humane handling, care, and treatment of animals used for research, exhibition, and breeding purposes; however, decades of negligent oversight by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have resulted in countless animal deaths and continues to endanger hundreds of thousands of innocent animals. Goldie's Act would repair the USDA's defective system by clarifying the agency's responsibilities under the AWA.

Dating back 30 years, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) has repeatedly documented the USDA's failure to establish an enforcement scheme that both prevents and alleviates animal suffering. The agency's "compliance through education" approach—which has been condemned by the OIG, especially in response to problematic and repeat violators—has been unsuccessful in achieving reasonable animal protection. In several instances, the agency's educational approach has led to grave welfare crises requiring intervention from the Department of Justice, local law enforcement, and animal welfare organizations. Moreover, the USDA's educational approach has empowered some members of the licensed community to break the law with impunity, leading to continued animal suffering. For example, an APHIS inspector said of repeat violator, Zachery Keeler:

Historically, this facility has had poor compliance. Animal Care inspectors and compliance staff have gone above and beyond to try to work with this licensee. The licensee refuses to take responsibility for the conditions at the facility... and made no improvements to his level of compliance... The licensee has been emboldened to behave this way due to lack of enforcement.<sup>1</sup>

Congress cannot allow nonenforcement to remain the status quo. Goldie's Act is a practical solution that brings us closer to achieving humane treatment of animals in commercial facilities as originally envisioned by the AWA. The bill would ensure that facilities are inspected with reliable frequency, ensure that violations are recorded and assessed for monetary penalties to deter future violations, provide suffering animals with immediate attention, and enhance cooperation with law enforcement to promote efficiency in cases of suspected animal cruelty.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> From Dr. Justine O'Malley, VMO, about Zachery Keeler in FOIA response 2023-APHIS-03872 page 861 on 2-24-2022.

In addition to the overwhelming majority of Americans who <u>support federal legislation</u> that would increase the USDA's enforcement of the AWA, Goldie's Act is supported by a <u>broad coalition</u> of over 60 organizations, including the National Sheriff's Association, the Small and Rural Law Enforcement Executives' Association, and the National Animal Care and Control Association.

We value the time and attention you've given to crafting a balanced and thorough Farm Bill, and we urge you to please include Goldie's Act in the upcoming Farm Bill to address the USDA's enforcement shortcomings and spare more animals from needless suffering.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to continuing working with you.

Sincerely,

Nicole Malliotakis Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick Member of Congress

Christopher H. Smith Member of Congress

Raja Krishnamoorthi Member of Congress

Mike Quigley Member of Congress

Sach Nunn / Member of Congress