



April 9, 2026

Dear Co-Chairs Fischer, Heintzeman and Members of House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE) staff working for the Minnesota Zoo, we write to express our support for the Governor's budget recommendation of \$3.8 million in supplemental funding for the Minnesota Zoo.

The Minnesota Zoo is a unique agency in that its operations require 24/7, year-round staffing, and its funding relies on three different sources: state appropriations, private donations and admission sales. This investment will allow the Zoo to maintain current operations, uphold high standards of care and safety, and plan effectively for long term financial sustainability.

Additionally, operating under a budget shortfall jeopardizes the Minnesota Zoo's ability to maintain safety for both staff and guests, and ensure staffing levels necessary for a 24/7 facility. Budget constraints can affect the Zoo's capacity to provide continuous care for its animals, which in turn impacts visitation levels. Adequate funding is essential to ensure the safety and well-being of animals, visitors, and staff alike.

Finally, the Minnesota Zoo provides significant benefits for our communities, including accessible educational experiences, wildlife conservation efforts, and a positive contribution to local tourism. Providing the agency with the Governor's recommended supplemental funding will help ensure the continuation of the Minnesota Zoo's ability to provide a positive experience for its visitors, staff, and its animal residents. We urge your support for this supplemental funding request.

Sincerely,

Tanner Fritsinger
Political Affair Coordinator
Minnesota Association of Professional Employees