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October 10, 2017

Representative Gary Howell  
Chair, Natural Resources Committee  
Michigan House of Representatives

*Hand Delivered; and via email: Joy Brewer, Committee Clerk, [joybrewer@house.mi.gov](mailto:joybrewer@house.mi.gov)*

**Re: Opposition to SB 316, House Natural Resources Committee Meeting, October 11, 2017**

Dear Representative Howell and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information to the committee. Attorneys for Animals, Inc. (AFA) is a Michigan non-profit and 501(c)(3) organization of legal professionals and animal advocates. The organization's Board of Directors voted to **oppose SB 316**.

The bill would repeal MCL 324.45501, a part of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act which sets minimal protections for frogs and which has been in place for nearly 90 years. Without these protections (which prevent year-round hunting of frogs and hunting them using artificial lights), more expansive hunting regulations are likely. This is unwise based on current science (as stated in the letter submitted on this bill when it was being considered by the Senate, by the Detroit Zoological Society, which is included below) and on policy. Importantly, **it would subject more frogs to a painful and slow death.**

By repealing MCL 324.45501, the legislature abdicates its authority to set minimal standards for hunting frogs, and turns over full power to the NRC. The legislature represents the entire population of Michigan—those who care about wildlife and those who don't; those who hunt and those who don't; those who oppose the consumptive use of wildlife and those who believe it is the centerpiece of wildlife management. The Natural Resources Commission, on the other hand, represents a much smaller constituency within the Michigan population.

If SB 316 becomes law, the NRC through the DNR is free to consider revising the regulations (and likely will, given the DNR's testimony in support at the Senate Natural Resources Committee hearing, May 17, 2017<sup>1</sup>).

However, there simply is not enough data on current frog populations to justify expanding the hunting of frogs.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.senate.michigan.gov/committees/files/2017-scm-nat\\_-05-17-1.pdf](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/committees/files/2017-scm-nat_-05-17-1.pdf)

The DNR itself has recently noted the lack of data on frog populations:

- The DNR Report No. 3627, Frog and Toad Status in Michigan, 2016 notes (at page 2): “For most species the trends are similar between zones. Most species’ trends appear to be stable or increasing. The 10-year analysis shows no species declining. The 20-year analysis shows declines in seven species, which is down from eight as calculated in 2015. **Research projects focusing on frog and toad populations are welcome and necessary.**” [emphasis added]<sup>2</sup>
- The DNR website provides information about all 13 species of frogs and toads in Michigan including state-wide maps (gridded off in large blocks of land) of where each species is found. For instance, the bullfrog map shows areas of the state where the frog is found, not found, or no data exists. In the case of the bullfrog, no data exists for large areas of the state.<sup>3</sup>

The DNR website itself discusses frog conservation<sup>4</sup> and notes: “Unfortunately, many human activities are harmful to frog and toad populations.” Certainly, expanded hunting should be carefully considered in light of this statement.

This bill is little more than an attempt to expedite the process of relaxing restrictions on hunting frogs, when the DNR itself has stated that more research is necessary.

Finally, we urge legislators to consider the position of Ruth Marcec, DVM, PhD, Director of the National Amphibian Conservation Center at the Detroit Zoological Society. Dr. Marcec’s comments are appended to this letter as **Attachment A**. She notes *inter alia*:

- “Stripping this protection could result in devastation of Michigan’s frog populations as a result of hunting of breeding adults.”
- “Studies have shown that frogs feel pain, and that death in this manner is incredible slow and agonizing. While a frog may appear dead, it often takes many hours to actually die from spearing. It is important that protections against this inhumane practice remain in place in Michigan state wildlife policy.”

The existing law provides minimal protections for frogs. We oppose this bill as opening the door to more expansive hunting of frogs, and urge you to not report the bill out of Committee.

Very Truly Yours,



Beatrice M. Friedlander, JD  
President

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2016\\_mi\\_frog\\_survey\\_report\\_550615\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2016_mi_frog_survey_report_550615_7.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/bullfrog\\_205373\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/bullfrog_205373_7.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10370\\_12145\\_12201-35089--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10370_12145_12201-35089--,00.html)

## ATTACHMENT A

The Detroit Zoological Society (DZS) urges voting *against SB316*, which, by repealing Section 45501 of Michigan's Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, would allow hunting of frogs year-round and allow hunting of frogs with the use of a spear ("gigging") and an artificial light. DZS created the world's first institution devoted specifically to the conservation of amphibians, the National Amphibian Conservation Center. It is a leader in global amphibian conservation, and is highly and uniquely qualified to comment on the conservation and management of amphibians.

Amphibian populations all over the globe are declining in the face of what is widely called an amphibian extinction crisis. Amphibian populations need protection in order to prevent irreversible population decreases. The current Michigan Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Section 45501, states that frogs cannot be hunted from November 16<sup>th</sup> through late spring. This protects frogs during their breeding cycle. Stripping this protection could result in devastation of Michigan's frog populations as a result of hunting of breeding adults.

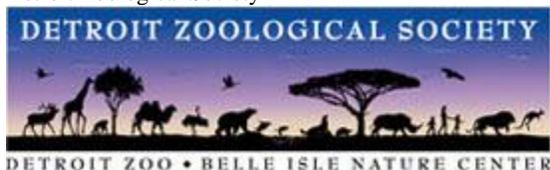
In addition to preventing hunting of frogs during their breeding cycle, the current Section 45501 of the Michigan Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act prohibits the hunting of frogs using a spear ("gigging") with the aid of an artificial light. Studies have shown that frogs feel pain, and that death in this manner is incredible slow and agonizing. While a frog may appear dead, it often takes many hours to actually die from spearing. It is important that protections against this inhumane practice remain in place in Michigan state wildlife policy.

DZS feels strongly that SB316 would repeal protections for frogs, put in place by Section 45501 of Michigan's Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, which are necessary to protect populations of amphibians and to minimize suffering of frogs. We strongly urge our lawmakers to vote against this effort to strip protection of Michigan's wild amphibians.

Sincerely,



**Ruth Marcec, DVM, PhD**  
Director, National Amphibian Conservation Center  
Detroit Zoological Society



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