July 29, 2026

California Fish and Game Commission
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1320
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Opposition to Petition 2026-06 – Request to Allow Certain Nonhuman Primates as Companion Animals

Dear Commissioners,

On behalf of the North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA), I respectfully submit these comments in opposition to Petition 2026-06, which requests that California amend its regulations to permit the private ownership of several nonhuman primate species as companion animals.

NAPSA is a coalition of eight primate sanctuaries across North America that collectively provide lifelong care to nearly 800 nonhuman primates. All NAPSA member sanctuaries are accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) and are licensed and inspected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), reflecting their commitment to the highest standards of animal care and welfare. Together, our member sanctuaries represent many of North America's leading experts in the long-term management and welfare of captive nonhuman primates. Our members care for primates retired from biomedical research, roadside zoos, entertainment, and private ownership. Based on our collective expertise, we strongly oppose this petition.

The petition proposes that species including marmosets, capuchins, macaques, and spider monkeys can be safely maintained in family homes through veterinary care, inspections, and husbandry standards. While we appreciate the petitioner's concern for responsible animal care, this proposal fundamentally underestimates the specialized needs of nonhuman primates and the risks associated with private ownership.

We are also concerned that the petition cites social media videos of pet primates as supporting evidence. Short, carefully curated online videos cannot substitute for scientific evidence or the decades of experience held by accredited sanctuaries, veterinarians, and primate professionals. They rarely depict the long-term realities of caring for highly intelligent, long-lived, and socially complex animals or the challenges that often lead privately owned primates to require sanctuary placement.

Public Safety

Even relatively small primate species are capable of inflicting serious injuries through bites and scratches. As primates mature, they become stronger, more territorial, and less predictable, particularly during sexual maturity. These behaviors are normal expressions of primate biology, not signs of poor ownership or inadequate training.

Nonhuman primates also present unique zoonotic disease risks. They are capable of transmitting serious diseases to humans, while also being highly susceptible to diseases transmitted by humans. These risks cannot be eliminated through routine veterinary care or household management. Unlike traditional companion animals that have undergone thousands of years of domestication, nonhuman primates remain wild animals with specialized biological and behavioral characteristics that make them fundamentally unsuitable as household pets.

Animal Welfare

Primates require complex social relationships with members of their own species, opportunities to express natural behaviors, specialized nutrition, environmental enrichment, and highly experienced veterinary care throughout lives that may span decades. Human companionship, regardless of the owner's commitment, cannot replace the social structure and species-specific interactions that primates require to thrive.

Collectively, NAPSA's member sanctuaries have provided lifelong care for numerous primates relinquished from private ownership after their needs exceeded what could reasonably be provided in a household setting. Across the sanctuary community, we routinely care for primates who arrived after years of social isolation, improper nutrition, inadequate housing, or behavioral deterioration that ultimately made them impossible to manage safely in a home. These outcomes are not isolated incidents. They reflect the fundamental mismatch between the needs of nonhuman primates and what even dedicated private owners can realistically provide.

The petition suggests that home inspections, liability insurance, veterinary care, and written husbandry plans would adequately safeguard animal welfare. However, our experience demonstrates that these measures cannot replicate the facilities, expertise, staffing, and species-specific social environments required to provide appropriate lifelong care for nonhuman primates.

Wildlife Trafficking and Conservation

NAPSA is particularly concerned that the petition includes spider monkeys among the species proposed for private ownership.

Spider monkeys are among the primates most heavily impacted by the illegal wildlife trade throughout Central and South America. Infant spider monkeys are commonly taken from the wild to be sold as pets after adult family members are killed defending them. This trade is frequently intertwined with organized criminal networks that also traffic drugs, weapons, and people. Expanding demand for spider monkeys as companion animals risks contributing to these illegal markets while creating additional public safety concerns for communities.

Although the petition proposes limiting ownership to captive-bred or legally sourced animals, distinguishing legally acquired animals from those that have been illegally trafficked is difficult in practice. Expanding the legal market for these species may create additional opportunities to launder illegally trafficked animals into commerce.

Conclusion

California's existing restrictions on private primate ownership reflect legitimate concerns for public safety, animal welfare, conservation, and disease prevention. Those concerns remain as valid today as when these regulations were adopted.

For these reasons, the North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance respectfully urges the California Fish and Game Commission to deny Petition 2026-06 and maintain California's longstanding restrictions on the private ownership of nonhuman primates.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Amanda (Andy) Gray
Director
North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance