American Ferret Association

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November 23, 2026

The Honorable Nicholas A. Langworthy

The Honorable Mark Pocan

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

Subject: Request to Include Domesticated Ferrets in H.R. 10522, the COMPACT Act, and American Ferret Association (AFA) Endorsement

Dear Representatives Langworthy and Pocan,

On behalf of the American Ferret Association (AFA), whose mission is to promote, protect, and provide for the domesticated ferret, I am writing to commend your bipartisan leadership in introducing H.R. 10522, the Companion Animal Protection Against Cruel Testing (COMPACT) Act. We strongly support the core objectives of the COMPACT Act: modernizing taxpayer-funded biomedical research by advancing human-relevant alternatives, strengthening transparency and accountability at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), establishing clear transition provisions for research institutions, and ensuring that companion animals used in research have a pathway to life outside laboratory facilities.

We would welcome the opportunity to join the broad coalition of animal welfare organizations backing this legislation. To endorse H.R. 10522 in alignment with our mission, we respectfully request that you amend the bill to include domesticated ferrets (*Mustela putorius furo*) alongside dogs and cats across its relevant provisions; specifically Section 2 (Definitions), Section 3 (Funding Prohibition), Section 4 (Disposition), Section 11 (Transparency and Annual Reporting), and Section 12 (GAO Review). Like dogs and cats, domesticated ferrets are intelligent, social, sentient companion animals, with an estimated 500,000 to 1,000,000 pet ferrets living in U.S. households. Yet according to USDA APHIS FY2025 annual report data, 10,003 domestic ferrets were reported in U.S. biomedical and academic research facilities, including 1,240 used in procedures where pain or distress was not minimized. Despite their legal coverage under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), domesticated ferrets face two persistent federal policy gaps that the COMPACT Act is uniquely positioned to address:

- **Oversight and Transparency Gaps:** Unlike dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, and hamsters, ferrets have no species-specific housing, enrichment, or care regulations under Title 9 CFR, leaving standards largely to individual institutions under general Subpart F rules. While USDA now itemizes domestic ferrets in its annual usage summary, H.R. 10522's HHS annual reporting on post-research welfare and rehoming (Section 11) and its three-year Government Accountability Office (GAO) review of laboratory veterinary services (Section 12) currently apply only to dogs and cats. Extending these provisions to ferrets would close a longstanding oversight gap.
- **Lack of Structured Post-Research Rehoming:** While more than a dozen states have enacted post-research adoption laws for dogs and cats, ferrets are routinely excluded. Today, rehoming healthy retired laboratory ferrets relies on an informal, underfunded network of volunteer shelters and rescues. Including ferrets in the COMPACT Act's protection and rehoming provisions would create a humane, sustainable standard.

The AFA approaches animal welfare through facts, veterinary expertise, humane care standards, and constructive collaboration. We do not condone the unnecessary suffering of any ferret, and we support continued movement toward scientifically valid alternatives to animal testing wherever possible and appropriate. Your bill's balanced approach of pairing federal funding accountability with clear transition certainty, explicit exemptions for veterinary care and species-specific or client-owned clinical research (Section 2(1)(C)), and limited emergency waiver authority for public health or national security needs (Section 5), aligns closely with AFA's principles and with the September 2026 USDA–HHS joint federal initiative to modernize companion animal oversight and advance non-animal research methods.

Enclosed is a one-page policy brief detailing companion animal demographics, laboratory usage, and regulatory context for your legislative staff. Thank you for your bipartisan commitment to companion animal welfare.

Sincerely,

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Enclosures: Policy Brief: **Including Domesticated Ferrets (*Mustela putorius furo*) in H.R. 10522 (The COMPACT Act)**

cc: AFA Governing Board; Ms. Jenna Smith