Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 5, 2024

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Sean Mahar
Interim Commissioner, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12223

Dear Governor Hochul and Interim Commissioner Mahar,

We are writing to express our deep concerns regarding the recent actions taken by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in the case of Peanut the Squirrel and Fred the Raccoon, who were euthanized following their seizure from a private residence in Pine City, NY. The decision to confiscate and euthanize these animals has raised significant concerns about the DEC's priorities, its use of taxpayer resources, and its commitment to due process, particularly when dealing with domesticated animals that pose minimal risk to public safety.

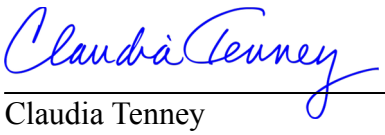
The unique circumstances surrounding Peanut and Fred—both beloved pets and integral to the owner's animal welfare sanctuary—should have prompted a more thoughtful approach. The choice to euthanize these animals, rather than explore alternative solutions for their care, combined with the DEC's limited communication with the owner, has been both shocking and disappointing. This situation not only impacts those directly involved but also sets a concerning precedent for how the state addresses cases involving wildlife and domesticated animals kept in safe, regulated environments.

Ensuring public safety and animal welfare are essential; however, these priorities should never come at the expense of transparency, accountability, and due process. To this end, we request a detailed account of how DEC resources were used in this case and the decision-making criteria that led to the seizure and euthanasia of Peanut and Fred. Additionally, please clarify the training and specific protocols DEC personnel follow in similar cases, as well as the measures in place to ensure such actions comply with ethical and procedural standards in the future.

It is imperative that we foster a system that protects public health while also respecting the rights of animal owners. We look forward to your prompt response regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Nicholas A. Langworthy
Member of Congress



Claudia Tenney
Member of Congress



Nicole Malliotakis
Member of Congress



Andrew R. Garbarino
Member of Congress



Marcus J. Molinaro
Member of Congress



Michael V. Lawler
Member of Congress



Anthony D'Esposito
Member of Congress



Nick LaLota
Member of Congress



Brandon Williams
Member of Congress