

September 2, 2025

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC, 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC, 20515

Re: Opposition to H.R. 4255, the so-called “Enhancing Safety for Animals Act of 2025”

Dear Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Huffman,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we express our strong opposition to H.R. 4255, the so-called “Enhancing Safety for Animals Act.” This legislation would prematurely strip away Endangered Species Act protections from Mexican gray wolves and push this critically imperiled animal closer to extinction. If passed, it would dismantle one of our nation’s greatest conservation success stories in the making at a most vulnerable time for the animal.

The Mexican gray wolf, the southernmost subspecies of the gray wolf, was exterminated from the wild by the U.S. government and private parties, through poisoning and trapping that began in 1915 in the western states including Arizona and New Mexico. Only the Endangered Species Act saved the lobo from vanishing entirely. After the Act’s passage, the descendants of just seven wild-born wolves were bred in captivity to save the subspecies from extinction and enable reintroduction. Thanks to those protections, and decades of investment and collaboration between public and private institutions, Mexican wolves were reintroduced to the wild in 1998, and today at least 286 roam Arizona and New Mexico, occupying a fraction of their historic and suitable range.

This fragile recovery is nowhere near secure. Over half of the genetic diversity salvaged from those last seven wolves has already been lost. In the wild, Mexican wolves now contain the equivalent genetic diversity of a population founded by just 2.09 wolves — meaning each wolf is, on average, related to the others as if they were siblings with each one sharing the same two parents. This genetic crisis is causing low birth rates, pup survival challenges, and congenital deformities. Federal management under the Endangered Species Act is critical at this moment to increasing genetic diversity.

The recovery is also jeopardized by high mortality rates from poaching and vehicle collisions. Illegal killing is the leading cause of death for lobos, with at least 105 wolves known to have been unlawfully killed between 1998 and 2019. A similar number of radio-collared wolves disappeared, many under suspicious circumstances, during this same span. These sources of mortality must be brought under control for successful recovery.

Finally, programs that address wolf and livestock conflicts are gaining momentum and delisting the animal now potentially places those programs at risk. There are effective options for preventing wolf-livestock interactions including range-riders, fencing, carcass removal and livestock guardian dogs. Since reintroduction, public and private partners have financially supported ranchers when rare livestock losses occur.

If protections are prematurely removed, mortality would likely increase through poaching and vehicle collisions, including genetically valuable wolves, releases of captive born wolves would end, and state and federal programs for livestock loss prevention and compensation could be put at risk. On the cusp of a decade of consistent Mexican gray wolf population growth, now is not the time to pull the rug out from what could be a great American wildlife recovery story.

For these reasons, we urge you to reject H.R. 4255.

Sincerely,

Center for Biological Diversity
Defenders of Wildlife
Animal Defenders International
Animal Protection New Mexico
Animal Welfare Institute
Apex Protection Project
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
Born Free USA
Carnivore Coexistence Lab
Cascadia Wildlands
Christian Council of Delmarva
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Center of San Diego
Environmental Protection Information Center- EPIC
FOUR PAWS USA
Friends of Merrymeeting Bay
Friends of the Earth Action
Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project
Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Mid Rio Grande Valley Chapter
GreenLatinos
Heartwood
Humane World Action Fund
Humane World for Animals
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
Izaak Walton League Rapid City, South Dakota Chapter
John Muir Project
Large Carnivore Fund
Lobos of the Southwest
Los Angeles Audubon Society
National Wolfwatcher Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
New Mexico Sportsmen
New Mexico Wild

Northeast Oregon Ecosystems
Orleans Audubon Society
Project Coyote
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER)
Resource Renewal Institute
Rio Grande Indivisible, New Mexico
Save Animals Facing Extinction
Sierra Club
Species Unite
Tahoe Wolf Center
Team Wolf
The International Wildlife Coexistence Network
The Rewilding Institute
The Urban Wildlands Group
Upper Gila Watershed Alliance
Western Nebraska Resources Council
Western Watersheds Project
Western Wildlife Conservancy
White Mountain Conservation League
Wild Arizona
WildEarth Guardians
Wilderness Watch
Wildlife for All
Wolf and Wildlife Advocates
Wolf Conservation Center
Wyoming Untrapped
Wyoming Wildlife Advocates