

Florida House of Representatives

Representative Dr. Anna V. Eskamani

District 42

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Email: Anna.Eskamani@flhouse.gov

Dear Attorney General Uthmeier,

I write to formally request that the Florida Attorney General's Office initiate a criminal investigation into the operators of the "Sloth World" facility and any of its related entities in Central Florida. Recent findings documented in incident reports from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) raise serious concerns regarding potential violations of Florida law, including but not limited to animal cruelty under Section 828.12, Florida Statutes, and unlawful acts involving captive wildlife under Chapter 379, Florida Statutes.

According to a Captive Wildlife Report dated August 7, 2025, FWC investigators conducted an unannounced inspection of a warehouse facility operated by Sanctuary World Imports, Inc. During this inspection:

- Investigators documented that multiple sloths were housed in enclosures that did not meet minimum size requirements under Florida Administrative Code, with required labeling and tracking records absent.
- The licensee admitted that at least 31 sloths had died between December 2024 and February 2025.
- These deaths were attributed to what was described as a "cold stun," after animals were imported into a warehouse facility that lacked basic utilities, including electricity and water, at the time of their arrival.
- Space heaters used to maintain temperature reportedly failed after tripping electrical circuits, and no overnight monitoring was in place during periods when temperatures dropped to levels unsafe for tropical wildlife.
- A subsequent shipment of sloths from Peru included animals that arrived dead or in a severely emaciated condition, with the remaining animals later dying due to poor health.

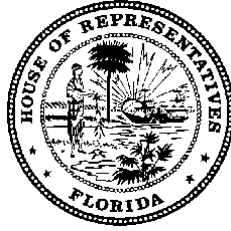
Despite these findings, only a verbal warning was issued at that time.

A subsequent FWC report dated March 19, 2026, indicates that the operation continued across multiple facilities with at least 28 sloths still in inventory. That report further notes ongoing deficiencies in recordkeeping, continued reliance on temporary or substandard enclosures, and incomplete documentation related to the sourcing and mortality of animals.

Taken together, these findings suggest a pattern of conduct that may rise beyond regulatory noncompliance and constitute criminal violations. Specifically:

- Section 828.12, Florida Statutes, prohibits the unnecessary or cruel killing of animals, as well as acts of neglect that result in excessive or repeated infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering. The documented lack of basic

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Security & Threat Assessment Committee • State Affairs Committee, Ranking Member • Economic Infrastructure Subcommittee
Human Services Subcommittee • Industries & Professional Activities Subcommittee*



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utilities, environmental controls, and supervision—despite known risks to the animals—raises serious concerns of culpable negligence.

- Chapter 379, Florida Statutes, governs the importation, possession, and exhibition of wildlife. The reported deficiencies in permitting compliance, recordkeeping, and animal handling may constitute violations subject to criminal penalties.
- The scale of mortality, combined with the continuation of operations and expansion toward a public exhibit, raises additional questions regarding potential misrepresentation in permitting, acquisition, or regulatory compliance processes.

Given the severity and scope of these findings, I respectfully request that your office:

- Initiate a full criminal investigation into the individuals and entities responsible for the importation, housing, and care of these animals;
- Coordinate with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and relevant federal agencies including the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- Evaluate whether charges are warranted under applicable provisions of Florida law; and
- Provide transparency to the public regarding investigative findings and enforcement actions.

It should also be noted that following an announcement of bankruptcy by “Sloth World”, 13 sloths were donated to the Central Florida Zoo, which noted that the sloths arrived in poor condition, with one sloth, Bandit, dying today. The loss of dozens of animals under preventable conditions demands accountability. These reports raise not only questions of individual responsibility, but also broader concerns about regulatory oversight and enforcement.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I stand ready to assist in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna V. Eskamani".

Representative Anna V. Eskamani, PhD

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