

May 8, 2023

Dear Congresswoman DelBene-

We are Valerie Greene, a lawyer and former killer whale trainer at SeaWorld Orlando, and Joe Kleiman, a trade journalist covering the attractions industry with extensive experience working with animals in zoos, marine life parks, and marine mammal rescue facilities. We are writing on behalf of a killer whale named Lolita (also known as Tokitae or Toki), who has been in captivity at the Miami Seaquarium for more than 50 years. There have been multiple USDA reports documenting starvation and animal cruelty at the Miami Seaquarium, involving Lolita and numerous other animals housed there.

In March of 2023, The Dolphin Company, which owns Miami Seaquarium, along with its non-profit partner Friends of Toki, proposed a plan to move Lolita back to her home waters in Washington State over the next 6-9 months, a proposed effort financed by Jim Irsay, billionaire owner of the Indianapolis Colts. Currently none of the necessary permit applications have been obtained by the appropriate government agencies to complete a move like this. The permitting process can be lengthy—the most recent NOAA Fisheries decision on Lolita took two years from date of petition to final decision—and Lolita needs to be removed from her current location as soon as possible.

At 58 years old, Lolita is one of the oldest killer whales in captivity and she battles chronic illness. The stadium that surrounds Lolita's tank is crumbling and has been condemned by the county. Hurricane season is less than a month away, and the facility is rapidly decaying. The condition of the tank combined with her health has created an emergency animal welfare situation and we urge you to intervene on her behalf.

As animal care professionals with over a decade of experience with marine mammals, we're very concerned about Lolita's welfare. No animal should be subjected to this level of cruelty. It's critical for her health and safety that she be rehabilitated in an intermediate tank prior to being placed in an ocean environment. A cleaner and safer tank would greatly reduce the stress she'd experience before a sea pen relocation and allow for feasible medical intervention if needed. There are three existing tanks in the United States which meet the criteria for housing Lolita, or a new tank could be built to serve the purpose, however we are running out of time.

We would like to work with you to find effective solutions to either get Lolita to another facility in the United States, or fast track a new tank. Time is of the essence. Please don't let her die this way.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Valerie Greene

Joe Kleiman