

[Sample letter] This letter can be sent to a Senator or Congress-person (it works for both). A hand-written letter will be the most personal and touching, but you can also print the edited letter.

Friendly tip: If there is something that your legislator did that you appreciate, such as supporting previous legislation, it's nice to open with: *"First, I would like to thank you for _____ (include details)."*

IMPORTANT: Please edit the red text. Blue text can be included or removed. Remove all orange text prior to sending your letter.

Dear **[Representative or Senator]** _____ ,

As your constituent I kindly ask that you consider co-sponsoring the SWIMS Act (HR 8514 and S. 4740 in the Senate). This bill would amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 and the Animal Welfare Act. This amendment will strengthen our animal welfare laws by prohibiting the taking, importation, exportation, and breeding of certain cetaceans for public display, and for other purposes. These majestic marine mammals should be observed and cherished in their natural habitat where they belong - not in captivity.

The SWIMS Act is cosponsored by Representatives Carolyn B. Maloney (D-N.Y.), Rick Larsen (D-Wash.), Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.), Tony Cárdenas (D-Calif.), and Alan Lowenthal (D-Calif.). In the Senate of the United States: Mrs. Feinstein (for herself, Mr. Booker, Mr. Wyden, Ms. Duckworth, Mr. Markey, Mr. Padilla, and Ms. Warren) introduced the SWIMS Act; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Option to personalize the letter further and include your concerns for captive cetaceans. Editable summaries below of Tokitae/Corky that you can include - or write your own.

I truly hope you'll consider supporting the SWIMS Act. I would also like to express my concern for captive cetaceans. Tokitae aka "Lolita" is a Southern Resident Orca. She was violently taken from her family in the Salish Sea in 1970 and has been forced to live in the smallest tank in North America [at Miami Seaquarium] for 52+ years. The first ten years of Tokitae's captivity were spent with a tank mate named Hugo. He died of a brain aneurysm after repeatedly ramming his head into the wall of the tank. Tokitae's presumed mother "Ocean Sun" is still alive in the Salish Sea and the oldest member and matriarch of L-Pod (a pod of Southern Resident Orcas). I hope that with enough support Tokitae will be relocated to a seaside sanctuary in the Salish Sea (perhaps with eventual release into the wild if viable).

Corky is a Northern Resident Orca - captured 9 months prior to Tokitae. Today, Corky swims in circles inside one of SeaWorld's tiny tanks. Members of her pod (her family) still swim freely in the ocean. Since her capture in 1969, Corky has only known a life of deprivation, suffering, and loss. We have seen the evidence with our own eyes - orcas mourn the loss of their young. Corky gave birth 7 times - none of her babies survived past two months. Corky has been attacked in her tank and thankfully survived, though the attacking orca did not. Her life has been full of heartache and pain. Like Tokitae, Corky has lived in a tiny tank for 52+ years and deserves the chance to live out the rest of her days in a seaside sanctuary. Hopefully our support will help get her there.

Miami Seaquarium has been in the news again for a negative USDA inspection report. Please consider including the paragraph below and express your concerns for the captive cetaceans at this location (in addition to any other locations you may want to mention).

The July 6, 2022 USDA inspection report of Miami Seaquarium stated that 9 of the captive dolphins had a 60% reduction in their diets - thus drastically reducing the weight of the dolphins, affecting their behavior, and well-being. The report describes the appearance and conditions of the underweight animals and notes that the food reduction was not approved by the attending veterinarian. From the USDA report: "Depriving these dolphins of their full dietary and nutrition requirements to ensure compliance during public encounters directly affected their health and well-being. The facility must provide each animal its full dietary requirements for each day. Deprivation of food or water shall not be used to train, work or otherwise handle animals. Correct from this day forward." This is not the first time the USDA has issued a negative inspection report for the Miami Seaquarium and although we all hope it's the last - it seems unlikely.

Please consider including the additional text below (in blue) to keep pressure on the USDA. Remove orange text before sending your letter.

Congresswomen Maria Elvira Salazar and Suzan DelBene released an official letter on July 20, 2022 calling for an update from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regarding Tokitae ("Lolita"). The letter was also signed by Representatives Frederica Wilson, Brian Mast, Ted Deutch, Rick Larsen, Jared Huffman, Nicole Malliotakis, and Adam Schiff. The lawmakers have requested clarity from the USDA as to what protections Tokitae and other animals have if they are not covered under the Animal Welfare Act exhibitor's license.

From their press release regarding the USDA report:

Earlier this year, Miami Seaquarium changed ownership and the USDA issued a license to the new owner under the Animal Welfare Act. The license excluded coverage of Seaquarium's Whale Stadium, where Lolita and another animal, a dolphin named Lii, both reside. USDA has never issued a license that does not cover all the licensee's facilities and animals. Because these two animals are also covered under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Endangered Species Act, this USDA decision raises concerns about the animals' legal status and welfare.

Representatives have provided their thoughts on the SWIMS Act. Please consider including the quotes below (in blue).

Regarding the SWIMS Act:

Rep. Adam Schiff: *"Whales are among the most intelligent, fascinating, and beautiful creatures in the world," "And they deserve to live freely in their natural habitats – not in captivity where their lives are defined by the four walls of a concrete tank."*

Co-author Senator Dianne Feinstein: *"The conditions these whales live in contribute to far shorter lifespans – captive orcas typically live just 12 years compared to 40 years in the wild – and there is significant evidence that captivity is excruciating for these mammals. SeaWorld announced in 2016 that its current orcas in captivity will be its last; the federal government should expand on this example and prohibit all new captive whales for purposes of entertainment."*

Rep. DelBene: *"The science is clear – when these marine mammals and other large whales are kept in captivity, they are often exploited, treated poorly, or abused."*

Rep. Huffman: *“The science and tragic real-life experiences have shown us time and again that marine mammals suffer from being in captivity - often being exploited and abused. But our laws and practices don’t reflect that. We need to finally make the humane changes that have been needed for decades.”*

Thank you for considering my request. (You can add a more personal end-note here)

Sincerely,

[name, mailing address, email address]