

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 21, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

I am requesting funding for the Sea Turtle Care and Research Complex in Fiscal Year 2026. The entity to receive funding for this project is East Coast Zoological Society (ECZS) located at 8225 North Wickham Road, Melbourne, Florida 32940.

The funding will be used to develop the Aquarium's Sea Turtle Care and Conservation Complex, the Aquarium's lifesaving facility dedicated to providing rehabilitative care and long-term sanctuary to stranded, washback, sick, and injured sea turtles before releasing them back into the wild and inspiring the community to take action to protect them. The complex will span 12,873 sq. ft., including 10,000 sq. ft. of indoor exhibition, rehabilitation, and veterinary space.

The project is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds because over the last two years, the ECZS has treated an average of 131 sea turtles per year, up 157% from an average of 51 a year. This is due in part to the growing number of turtles suffering with a virus so difficult and expensive to treat that most facilities will not even try. The facility is one of only seven sea turtle rehabilitation facilities in Florida, and a small number in the world, that will accept turtles suffering with the virus. The zoo has also built a seagrass nursery to help restore the loss of the critical food source for sea turtles and manatees in the Indian River Lagoon.

The project has a federal nexus because the funding provided is for purposes authorized by the Coastal Zone Management Act's, 16 U.S.C. Ch. 33, goals to support the protection, restoration and responsible development of coastal communities.

I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Sincerely,



Mike Haridopolos
Member of Congress