Dear Commissioner:

I strongly oppose construction of the Miami Wilds Development alongside Zoo Miami because it will irreversibly damage an environmentally sensitive land and threaten four endangered species: the Florida bonneted bat, the Miami tiger beetle and two butterflies. I urge you to delay the Miami Wilds final lease vote until thorough environmental reviews can be conducted and a different location can be identified.

Approving this project also goes against the will of Miami-Dade citizens who, in the 2006 Referendum, only authorized the development of the Miami Wilds project “… on Land that is not Environmentally Sensitive.” Given that the proposed project location for Miami Wilds is currently utilized by four federally listed endangered species, the location is an environmentally sensitive land, and therefore it does not meet the referendum criteria. In point of fact, the proposed location of the Miami Wilds project under consideration outright defies the parameters approved by voters in 2006.

Ongoing research carried out by Bat Conservation International confirms that the area being proposed for development is a critically important foraging area for the federally listed endangered Florida bonneted bat. While this large open space may presently be used for parking, it is nonetheless one of the most important areas for the conservation of the rarest species of bat in the United States. Characteristics at this large open space that contribute to its importance include: its exceptional size; its low physical profile; its proximity to the biologically rich endemic pine rocklands habitat; and little or no artificial lighting.

Recent studies done in 2019 and 2020 also confirm the extensive use of these pine rocklands and parts of the open space by the endangered Miami tiger beetle. In fact, the Richmond Pine Rocklands is the only site where the Miami tiger beetle can reliably be found, despite extensive cross-county surveys.

Because of the four federally listed endangered species at risk, the land’s environmentally sensitive characteristics and the voters’ clear referendum on protecting such places from development, I urge the final lease vote of the Miami Wilds Project to be postponed and adifferent site secured. To rush into this project as proposed could potentially violate Federal Endangered Species laws, violate the terms of the 2006 Public Referendum and cause irreversible environmental impacts. The damage done by developing this project on environmentally sensitive land could also lead to drastic population declines – possibly extinction – of four species unique to Florida.

**No amusement park is worth the extinction of a single species!**