

# Committee on Resources

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## Witness Testimony

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### Testimony of Lixing Lao, Ph.D. on H.R. 2807 and H.R. 3113

The American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine  
The Maryland Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine  
The Complementary Medicine Program, School of Medicine  
University of Maryland  
February 5, 1998

Good morning. My name is Lixing Lao and I am both a Doctor of Oriental Medicine and a Ph.D.. I am appearing here before you today on behalf of the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine (ACTCM) in San Francisco; the Maryland Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine at Bethesda (MITCM); and the Complementary Medicine Program (CMP) at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. I am an Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland and also serve as Clinic director at the Maryland Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine. In case any of your staff wish to search our website, the U.R.L. address is, for ACTCM: [www.actcm.org](http://www.actcm.org) for MITCM: [www.mitcm.org](http://www.mitcm.org) for CMP at the University of Maryland: [www.compmed.ummc.ab.umd.edu](http://www.compmed.ummc.ab.umd.edu)

The following is an jointed statement prepared by Ms. Lixin Huang, the President of the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and myself.

We would like to thank the members of the committee for providing the opportunity to testify today about the critical need for ensuring safe habitat for the endangered tiger, and about the most effective and pragmatic ways to achieve that goal in the near future.

1998 marks the Year of the Tiger in the Chinese calendar, which began on January 28<sup>th</sup>, the Chinese New Year. In Chinese culture, the tiger is regarded as the a King of Wildlife, a symbol of energy, strength, speed, agility, and power, as well as of threat and danger. There are a number of Chinese idioms with the character representing a tiger" in them. To describe, for example, and individual or a business within certain conditions as being more successful, it is often expressed as a tiger with wings; to praise active, healthy and energetic people, they are called a tiger come to life; the accomplishment of a task that includes great risk or danger is described as pulling the teeth out of a tigers mouth; to have worked with a fine start and a poor finish is described as Ain like a tiger, out like a lamb. For many, many years, people of Chinese descent have had an affinity for the image of the tiger, which has been reflected in the language, in literature, graphics, art, and medicine.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (hereby TCM) and acupuncture has been developed and perfected over several millennia as an integral part of Chinese culture. It has counterparts in the Ayurvedic system of India and in some Western practices. It is widely used today throughout the world, often integrated with allopathic biomedicine, the most prevalent form of medical practice in the United States. In the United States, 34 states have passed legislation to support the practice of acupuncture and TCM, and consumer demand has resulted in a growing number of insurance carriers and HMOs making some Oriental Medicine available.

TCM is a system of health care based on the concepts of Chinese natural philosophy, and it encompasses

internal medicine, gynecology, pediatrics, dermatology, mental dysfunction, gerontology, immunology, oncology and pain management. Its applications range from the therapeutic practice of herbology and nutrition to acupuncture, massage, and Tai-Ji and Qi-Gong exercises. As a long-standing and evolving form of human health care, TCM relies primarily on botanical materials and acupuncture needles as the basis for treatments, the latter have been classified by FDA as medical devices and confirmed by NIH as a safe and effective therapy " for the relief of pain and for a variety of health conditions".

Chinese *materia medica* are usually used in two ways: in traditional whole remedies and in "patent medicines". In traditional whole remedies, unprocessed *materia medica* are mixed according to ancient formulae as modified and prescribed by a trained practitioner, who may perhaps also follow an established standard of care in certain syndromes. "Patent medicines" are also combined according to traditional formulations or standards of care, but are processed into tablets, tonics, pills and powders produced in large quantities. These are packaged in a medical factory and sold, exported to markets worldwide. The United States and Canada both import and produce such "patent medicines"

The exploitation of the tiger and other endangered species for use in "patent medicines" has been a major conservation concern over the last decade. Our associates in the World Wildlife Fund and in the Wildlife Conservation Society have already testified to the overwhelming threat faced by tigers in the wild, and we need not underscore the continuing threat to human life posed by the decreasing biodiversity of the planet. Although C.I.T.E.S. has banned the trade in tiger parts and products for over a decade, illegal commerce has continued because of the consumer demand, even though viable and effective alternatives to parts from endangered species are available. One of the key problems to be addressed is the lack of education about the alternatives to the use of endangered species parts among both consumers and practitioners. One of the other major problems is the perception, because TCM is so thoroughly a part of Asian culture, that conservation efforts are a result of cultural imperialism and insensitivity. The initial approach to the problem of severe international mandates and government enforcement did not serve to increase understanding.

Therefore, there is an *urgent* need for a new conservation approach.

An effective and pragmatic approach would be to educate consumers and, rather than impose upon, to *work with* TCM communities, bringing the awareness of the need for tiger conservation and useful medical alternatives directly *into* the community.

The World Wildlife Fund and our organizations have joined together in an effort to take this new conservation approach. Together, we have developed an outreach program which will serve as the first systematic effort in North America to educate TCM users and practitioners, both those within and outside of the Asian-American communities, about endangered species issues. We will use culturally sensitive approaches and community-based educators to reach each target audience. In addition, we will be joining several conferences and holding our own symposium in San Francisco on tiger conservation and TCM.

What our organizations and our colleagues now need from the committee is not only this helpful public airing of these issues, but a commitment to help us secure the necessary private, and perhaps public, financial support to carry out this critical plan of education and outreach. We need an indication that you understand the gravity of the issues, and the usefulness and pragmatism of our approach to addressing them. In essence, we need for the committee *not* to go in like a tiger and out like a lamb but to, instead, pull that bad tooth from the mouth of the tiger so that the tiger can come alive and our project can be like a tiger with wings.

Please do whatever is in the scope of the committee and of your individual offices to help us make this a Year *for* the Tiger.

Thank your very much for your time.

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