

February 17, 2026  
Senate Committee On Natural Resources  
Senate Bill 1082

My name is Mary McGonigle-Martin. I'm vice president of a non-profit called Parker's Promise.

In early to mid-November of 2025, Parker's Promise provided emotional support and guidance to four families from Arizona who had children hospitalized with STEC-HUS after attending the Arizona State Fair petting zoo. I'm here today to be the voice for Aaliyah, Julian, Lucy and Shaynie.

Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome, known as HUS, is a rare childhood red blood disorder and the number one cause of acute kidney failure in infants and young children. Around 10-15% of children with an STEC infection go on to develop HUS.

In the U.S., about 300 children annually develop this horrific disease. The Shiga toxin destroys the red blood cells which lead to cell death. The body of a child begins the dying process. Medical interventions like blood, platelet and plasma transfusions along with kidney dialysis are administered to save a child's life. The typical hospital stay can be 15-30 days with severe cases lasting for months.

I know this nightmarish journey well. In 2006, my 7 year old son developed STEC-HUS and was hospitalized for 56 days. HUS ravages the human body. The Department of Homeland Security lists Shiga toxin as a potential bioterrorist agent.

For over a quarter of a century, public health has known farm animals are a HUGE STEC risk factor for young children. Yet despite all the safety recommendations, outbreaks continue to occur. They continue to occur because these are NOT safety mandates, only recommendations. In 2005, the Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings was published by the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) and the CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention). The most recent update was published in 2023.

Agricultural lobbyists have known the danger of STEC and the vulnerability to young children. Thirty-one states have agritourism immunity laws that shield an agritourism business from liability if someone is harmed. Arizona is one of these states. This means the parents of children who have become severely ill or died after attending a petting zoo may have no legal recourse. Many children are left with some level of disability and for severe cases, hospital bills that can add up to millions of dollars. The state fair or petting zoo cannot be sued because they have a liability law to protect them. My question is, "Who is protecting our children?" I'm here today to advocate for Arizona's children.

We need to adapt our safety concerns to the new world we live in. E.coli 0157:H7 is considered a bioterrorism agent, yet children are allowed to have contact with animals that are known to shed this toxin in their manure. Fifty years ago, STEC was not in the intestines of cows, goats, sheep, deer and pigs. Today it has infiltrated both wild and farm animals. Animal contact safety standards need to be mandated in Arizona. If we can mandate car seats for children, we can mandate farm animal contact safety standards.

Each year 230 children are hospitalized and 2 die from STEC infections after animal contact. We know farm animals shed STEC and young children are at high risk for becoming ill. We also know safety precautions can prevent illnesses. No parent should ever suffer the horror of losing a child, or having their child left with permanent brain damage, the loss of a colon or needing a kidney transplant because they simply attended a petting zoo. Safety "recommendations" are not enough.

Arizona is taking a step forward to protect their children by mandating hand washing stations, enclosed area for animals, safety signage at the entrance and exit, and supervision of all petting zoos and animal encounter exhibits. Please vote yes for SB 1082.

