



Secular Maryland

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February 14, 2024

**HB 379 - FAV**

Wildlife - Traveling Animal Acts - Prohibition

Dear Chair Marc Korman, Vice-Chair Regina T. Boyce, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

It has been known for decades that travel, confinement, and being forced to perform tricks deprive wild animals of opportunities to satisfy their complex physical, behavioral, and emotional needs. Their lives constitute abuse as entertainment. The need for stronger legal protections is clear.

We are finally seeing some momentum at the state and local level to ban the use of some wild animals in circuses. Dozens of North American cities, along with a couple of states, prohibit the use of bullhooks—which, in effect, means a ban on circuses with elephants. Others, like San Francisco and Santa Fe, New Mexico, have full bans on performing wild animals. Maryland should be among the states that ban traveling animal acts.

We tend to underestimate the harm we are doing to animals that cannot speak. Animals are not a separate category of life fundamentally different from us who were placed on earth by a deity for the benefit of humans. We are all animals. We can, and therefore we should, do better. Secular Maryland firmly supports legislation to compensate for the commercial incentives that stress the lives of animals.

Respectfully,  
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