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Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*

Capital Budget

Pensions

Chair, Public Safety,  
Transportation, and Environment

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and  
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area

Chair, Joint Subcommittee on  
Program Open Space/Agricultural  
Land Preservation

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 13, 2024

**Testimony in Favor of SB 547  
Wildlife - Traveling Animals Act - Prohibition**

Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 547 to protect elephants, bears, big cats, and primates from the cruel conditions of traveling shows.

**Animals in traveling acts are subjected to cruel and abusive conditions for the sake of performance.** They are subjected to prolonged confinement in cages where they eat, sleep, defecate, and urinate - in some instances are chained to the cage itself - leading to chronic illness as a result of high stress and limited exercise. Training practices utilized by traveling acts commonly include the use of whips, sticks, ropes, bullhooks, and electric prods, resulting in lacerations, puncture wounds, trauma, and stress. Brian Franzen of Loomis Bros. Circus has even admitted to spraying cayenne pepper in tigers' eyes and noses to compel obedience.

**Traveling animal acts bring public health and safety dangers to the communities they visit.** Wild animals can spread disease to human populations, including the human strain of tuberculosis with which 12.4% of captive elephants in the US have tested positive<sup>1</sup>. Even healthy animals pose a safety risk to entire communities, as wild animals may respond to chronic stress and trauma with desperate and unpredictable behaviors. Animal trainers have been attacked and even killed in front of live audiences<sup>2</sup>. Elephants have rampaged at performances, injuring audience members<sup>3</sup>. In 2004, a tiger escaped its enclosure at UniverSoul Circus in Landover, Maryland and roamed the fairgrounds where multiple elementary schools were visiting with students<sup>4</sup>.

While larger circuses like Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus have eliminated animal acts, smaller traveling acts continue to travel through Maryland. Companies including Loomis Bros. Circus, Tarzan Zerbini Circus, Carden Circus, and more continue to bring their acts to Maryland each year. Despite many of these

<sup>1</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23477422/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2001/mar/26/tiger-kills-animal-trainer/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/International/watch-spooked-circus-elephant-attack-car-apparent-whack/story?id=32516732>

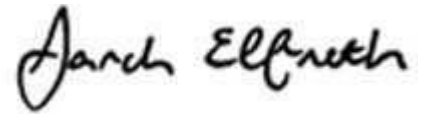
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/BigCatIncidentList.pdf>

companies having been repeatedly cited by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act, they continue to perform in Maryland. Throughout the United States, 8 states and 190 localities have established prohibitions on wild animals in traveling acts, including Montgomery County and Gaithersburg, Maryland.

The evidence is clear: traveling acts with wild animals endanger the health and safety of the animals involved and the communities they visit. Senate Bill 547 is a necessary step toward protecting Marylanders and animals from these dangerous and harmful traveling acts.

I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 547.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Elfreth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Sarah Elfreth  
District 30