



# Animal Welfare Institute

900 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20003  
awionline.org phone: (202) 337-2332 fax: (202) 446-2131

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House Committee on Environment and Transportation  
Maryland General Assembly  
Annapolis, MD

Re: Support for HB 379

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Animal Welfare Institute, a national nonprofit animal advocacy organization with thousands of members in Maryland, I respectfully urge you to support HB 379. This bill would prohibit the use of certain animals – including elephants, tigers, bears, and primates – in circuses and other traveling animal acts. It builds upon a growing public concern for animals used for entertainment and follows in the footsteps of similar laws around the US. To date, eight states and nearly 200 other localities have passed legislation to address the cruel treatment of circus animals or to ban animal acts entirely, and many other areas are considering similar measures.

The tigers, elephants, and other animals used in circuses are deprived of nearly everything that is important to them. They are confined in small cages, denied the opportunity to express their physical and social needs, and forced to spend endless hours in transit inside cramped trailers and train cars. Their training often involves punishing methods, and their handlers may beat, restrain, and sedate them. These are wild animals with natural instincts and they deserve the freedom to express their natural behaviors.

Performing exotic animals are also a threat to public health and safety. Circuses and traveling shows bring people dangerously close to incredibly strong, stressed, and unpredictable wild animals, often with little or no effective barriers separating them. Scores of people have been injured (and even killed) by animals used in traveling shows when they have escaped cages, bitten, attacked, and even killed spectators and trainers.

Traveling wild animal acts are dwindling in popularity and economic viability, and some have closed while others have successfully shifted away from an animal-centered business model. Permitting only animal-free shows is an economically sound, public safety-minded, and thoroughly commonsense move that aligns with the compassionate values of Maryland citizens.

Unlike human entertainers, exotic animals do not choose to perform. Laws at the state level are crucial to end this exploitation, which is why I respectfully request for your support for HB 379.

Sincerely,

Kate Dylewsky  
Assistant Director, Government Affairs  
Animal Welfare Institute  
(202) 446-2142  
kate@awionline.org