



Animal Welfare.
Worldwide.

January 24, 2024

Environment and Transportation Committee

HB379

An Act concerning Wildlife – Traveling Animal Acts – Prohibition

FAVORABLE

On behalf of our Maryland supporters, FOUR PAWS USA strongly supports House Bill 379, which would prohibit a person from allowing for the participation of certain wild animals in a traveling animal act. This bill would benefit both public safety and animal welfare.

As a global animal welfare organization with 13 sanctuaries around the world, FOUR PAWS has years of expertise concerning the rescue, rehabilitation, and sanctuary care of big cats, bears, elephants, and other wild animals rescued from terrible conditions in captivity.

FOUR PAWS supports this bill because the keeping, training, and transportation of wild animals like big cats, bears, elephants, and nonhuman primates in traveling shows involve some of the saddest forms of captivity and cruelty. Stuck in inhospitable conditions, these wild animals are brutally forced to adapt to abnormal surroundings and perform unnatural behaviors. Beyond subjecting these animals to neglect, abusive training, and prolonged confinement, these productions also put the health and safety of the public at risk.

Through our work, we've witnessed first-hand the physical and psychological trauma and extreme confinement these animals endure for entertainment. Common problems include malnutrition, cracked teeth, tooth decay and missing teeth, chronic pain from non-existent veterinary care, arthritis from ongoing repetitive movements, abnormal behavior, and psychological stress resulting in fear or aggression towards people and new environments.

FOUR PAWS has also seen the successful recovery of wild animals in our sanctuaries. When in a safe, species-appropriate environment, these animals experience dramatic improvements in their physical and mental health and display less stereotypic behaviors (like pacing and head swaying) that are indicators of stress and anxiety. These recoveries show us that it is never too late to offer these captive wild animals a better life over their continued exploitation for entertainment.


Wild animals have complex emotional, behavioral, and physical needs that cannot be satisfied by traveling shows. This is why FOUR PAWS urges the committee to vote favorably on HB379, a commonsense bill that both protects the public from dangerous wild animal encounters and provides a more humane life for wild animals in captivity.

Sincerely,

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