



February 12, 2024

To: Sen. Brian Feldman, Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Del. Marc Korman, Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

Re: SB547/HB379: Wildlife - Traveling Animal Acts - Prohibition

Dear Chair Feldman, Chair Korman, and Honorable Committee Members:

On behalf of The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore ("Maryland Zoo"), I am writing to express our enthusiastic support of HB379 and SB547. The Maryland Zoo is a proud member of the distinguished community of zoos and aquariums accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). AZA accreditation assures excellent care for animals, a great experience for visitors, and a better future for all living things. Fewer than 10% of the approximately 2,800 animal exhibitors licensed by the United States Department of Agriculture are AZA accredited. AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums undergo a thorough review that includes a detailed accreditation application as well as a multiple day on-site inspection by a team of experts from around the country.

The Maryland Zoo provides direct care for many of the species covered by HB379 and SB547, including elephants, lions, bears, and numerous species of nonhuman primates. These animals naturally lead rich and varied lives and possess complex physical, behavioral, and psychological needs. As leaders in animal care, we are familiar with the considerable resources required to adequately meet these needs in a zoological facility – needs that cannot be accommodated in a traveling environment. By definition, traveling shows cannot provide the space, substrates, climate, and social conditions necessary to meet even the basic needs of animals covered by this legislation.

Wild animals in human care have complex psychological and physical needs, and the very nature of traveling shows – near-constant travel and daily, prolonged restraint – subjects these animals to conditions that impact their overall well-being. Ongoing transportation, exposure to unfamiliar surroundings, and unpredictable environments contribute to stress and anxiety. The confined spaces in which they are kept for extended periods during travel and while on temporary exhibition do not provide opportunity for adequate exercise, mental stimulation, or the ability to engage in natural behaviors.

This legislation will allow elephants, bears, nonhuman primates, and big cats to be cared for and shared with the public in brick-and-mortar institutions, such as respected AZA-accredited institutions with core conservation and welfare values.

The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore's commitment to the safety and well-being of all animals is a priority, and we believe that HB379 and SB547 are aligned with that commitment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kirby Fowler".

Kirby Fowler
President & CEO, Maryland Zoo in Baltimore