



March 23, 2026

Chair Smith
Vice Chair Waldstreicher
Judicial Proceedings Committee
Room 2
East Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: HB 53 (Criminal Law – Nondomesticated Animal Prohibitions – Alterations)

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is a coalition of eight of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. Amongst its other functions, NAPSA serves as a central point of contact and expertise for issues relating to captive primates. NAPSA member sanctuaries collectively provide exceptional care to close to 800 nonhuman primates retired from laboratory research, private ownership, and the entertainment industry. Each full member sanctuary is licensed and inspected by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) or its Canadian equivalent, licensed by relevant state and county authorities, and accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries.

We write to you today in support of HB 53, as it would remove an existing exemption for “service monkeys” from Maryland’s Nondomesticated Animal Prohibitions. While the relationship between a disabled human and a service monkey may appear mutually beneficial on the surface, the monkeys used in this industry experience compromised health and welfare. In addition to painful training methods utilized in an attempt to control these naturally independent and inquisitive wild animals, they are often subjected to total teeth extraction for “ease of handling,” which drastically limits the foods they can eat and often leads to malnutrition. Monkeys require daily mental stimulation and extensive physical activity, which is impossible for even an able-bodied person to provide. Primates kept in human homes are rarely monitored by animal welfare officials and adequate veterinary care for primates is difficult to find. Once primates reach adolescence, they become unmanageable. They have strong jaws, and bites – even from toothless monkeys – result in painful injuries to humans.

Many public and private organizations have denounced the use of monkeys as service animals. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Justice ruled that monkeys are not service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs does not fund service monkeys for veterans. The American Veterinary Medical Association and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals also oppose primates as service animals. We strongly urge your Committee to make the right choice and encourage increased public safety, higher standards of animal welfare, and a commitment to end this practice so that captive animals may lead more species-appropriate lives.

We urge Maryland to vote YES on HB 53.

Sincerely,

Amanda Gray, Director

NAPSA is a fiscally sponsored project of Community Initiatives, an Oakland, CA-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
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Visit our website at www.PrimateSanctuaries.org