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March 6, 2009

Senator Edward Meyer (D)
Representative Richard Roy (D)
Co-Chairs, Connecticut Joint Committee on the Environment
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Dear Senator Meyer and Representative Roy,

I am writing to express my concern over HB 6555, (that the general statutes be amended to adopt new rules to "to prohibit the inhumane treatment of elephants".) We oppose the passage of this legislation as federal rules for animal care practices already exist.

It is concerning that this bill specifically targets a legitimate business that has a long and distinguished history in our state. Bridgeport was the home of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Winter Quarters from the 1870's to the 1930's. P.T. Barnum served as Mayor of Bridgeport from 1875 to 1876, and as a State Legislator for four terms. Barnum was committed to the cultural and social well-being of the City and was instrumental in establishing such institutions as Seaside Park, The Barnum Museum and Bridgeport Hospital. Barnum supported the initiatives of the American Society for the Prevention of the Cruelty to Animals, and ultimately dedicated a monument to Henry Berg, the first President of the Society, which still stands at Bridgeport's Seaside Park today. As you can see, P.T. Barnum's legacy is inextricably tied to Bridgeport. Since the opening of Arena at Harbor Yard in October 2001 the local audiences have again been able to enthusiastically embrace the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, this true American tradition.

Elephants are an integral part of the public image of the circus, and this bill is clearly intended to prevent their appearance in our state. This is not only unnecessary for the reasons I will describe below, but will also negatively impact our state's economy, since patrons will simply spend their money in another state which continues to permit circus performances. Circuses contribute to the local economies of the communities in which they perform and help support municipal arenas. Existing legislation more than adequately guarantees the safety and fair treatment of all animals.

The display and care of elephants and other performing animals is already subject to animal welfare laws and regulations at the federal, state and local levels. For example, The federal Animal Welfare Act, under which the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requires licensing and inspections. Circuses and other animal exhibitors are also subject to state and local animal cruelty laws and permit requirements.

Such regulations provide protection to all performing animals and allow for the prosecution of those who neglect or mistreat the animals in their care.

Elephants have long been an important and beloved of circus culture and history. The affection and awe that they generate among circus audiences helps focus attention on the current challenges facing the future survival of the species. The state **should not** take away the public's right to choose whether or not to view these majestic animals in entertainment.

I understand **HB 6555** will be on the public hearing agenda of the Joint Environment Committee. As I unfortunately will be unable to attend the hearing, please note that we stand **AGAINST** this bill.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lynn Carlotto".

Lynn Carlotto
General Manager