



**SIERRA  
CLUB**

*Connecticut Chapter*

*P.O. Box 270595*

*West Hartford, Connecticut 06127*

[connecticut.sierraclub.org](http://connecticut.sierraclub.org)

Dear Environment Committee Chairs Cohen and Demicco, Vice-Chairs Gresko and Kushner, Ranking Members Harding and Miner, and distinguished members of the Committee.

On behalf of the Sierra Club and our more than 40,000 members and supporters in Connecticut, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 413 and House Bill 5456.

**S.B. 413 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF EXOTIC OR WILD ANIMALS IN TRAVELING ANIMAL ACTS**

Sierra Club Connecticut supports Senate Bill 413 to ban traveling animal acts from keeping wild and exotic animals in their shows.

Wild animals in traveling shows can be subjected to prolonged confinement, sometimes lasting months in dangerous and stressful conditions. In between performances, animals, such as big cats, are kept in cages barely bigger than themselves. Elephants and similar are chained or confined to small pens, and many animals are routinely deprived of adequate exercise, proper veterinary care, or even regular food and water.<sup>1</sup> They are hauled to various performances in unventilated trucks and trailers.<sup>2</sup> Also animals that have the potential to be dangerous should not be performing and living under such stressful situations that can push them to their limits.

In 2018, New Jersey passed “Nosey’s law”, which prohibits the use of elephants in traveling animal acts. Hawaii passed similar legislation that year. Over forty countries worldwide, including Peru, Mexico, Israel, Iran, El Salvador, Costa Rica, India and Lebanon, have already prohibited the use of wild animals in circuses. One hundred and forty nine localities in 39 states have full or partial bans on the use of animals in

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.humanesociety.org/news/hawaii-becomes-second-state-one-week-prohibit-wild-animals-used-circuses>

<sup>2</sup> <https://blog.humanesociety.org/2018/12/breaking-news-new-jersey-becomes-first-state-to-adopt-a-sweeping-ban-on-wild-animals-in-circuses.html>



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circuses. More than 40 U.S. cities have outlawed performances that involve exotic animals.<sup>3</sup>

We urge you to support this bill.

## **H.B. 5456 AN ACT CONCERNING EXEMPTIONS TO THE PASSPORT TO THE PARKS FEE FOR SENIORS, VETERANS AND CERTAIN VEHICLE OWNERS**

Sierra Club Connecticut opposes House Bill 5456. Exempting these or any groups from paying the Passport to Parks fee is a bad idea and would devastate the State Parks' budget.

The operations and maintenance of our state parks and campgrounds depend greatly on the Passport to Parks fund. These funds primarily come from the small \$5.00 a year per vehicle fee collected at the DMV for motor vehicle registrations. For this small fee, ALL Connecticut residents receive free entry to all state parks. This program is a great deal for both our state parks system and for our residents. It's a win-win.

Since the implementation of the program, attendance is up at our state parks by 10% over the last two years.<sup>4</sup> As attendance goes up, so does the need for more qualified staff and the cost of maintaining the parks. Reducing the amount of revenue from the Passport to Parks program would risk returning it to the problems of a few years ago when parks were neglected, four campgrounds were forced to close, hours were shortened at most facilities, and staffing was cut. Our state parks are part of what makes Connecticut great. We must continue to prioritize them.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.four-paws.us/campaigns-topics/topics/wild-animals/worldwide-circus-bans>

<sup>4</sup>

<https://www.courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-news-passport-to-parks-success-20190831-kain2bht2jewnphqr23x5ucsqq-story.html>



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Everybody benefits from the State Park system. It benefits our residents in the form of both recreation and education, brings one billion dollars a year into our state's economy and provides 9,000 private sector jobs.<sup>5</sup> Providing exemptions for certain groups both would unfairly burden everyone else and devastate the revenue generated by Passport to Parks. We must preserve this funding.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues and consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

Ann Gadwah, Chapter Chair

Sierra Club Connecticut

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ctwoodlands.org/public-policy/economic-study-state-parks-forests-and-wildlife-areas>