

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5293

AN ACT PROHIBITING THE USE OF WILD OR EXOTIC ANIMALS IN

Title: TRAVELING ANIMAL ACTS.

Vote Date: 3/28/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/14/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

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Rep. Anne M. Hughes, 135th Dist.

Sen. Derek Slap, 5th Dist.

Rep. Michael A. Winkler, 56th Dist.

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Rep. Jason Doucette, 13th Dist.

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Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.

Rep. Nicole Klarides-Ditria, 105th Dist.

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Rep. Josh Elliott, 88th Dist.

Sen. Dennis A. Bradley, 23rd Dist.

Rep. John K. Hampton, 16th Dist.

Rep. Eleni Kavros DeGraw, 17th Dist.

Rep. Lucy Dathan, 142nd Dist.

Rep. Laura M. Devlin, 134th Dist.

Rep. Tony J. Scott, 112nd Dist.

Sen. Rick Lopes, 6th Dist.

Rep. Edwin Vargas, 6th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

To prohibit the use of wild and exotic animals in traveling circuses.

JOINT FAVORABLE SUBSTITUTE:

Exempted certain domestic animals from inclusion and established penalty as class C misdemeanor.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie S. Sykes, Commissioner of DEEP

DEEP has concerns with this proposed legislation. While they are deeply committed to the conservation of all wildlife, native and exotic, the proposed legislation would create administrative and enforcement challenges for the Department.

State of Connecticut Judicial Branch, External Affairs Division

The Judicial Branch takes no position on the policies furthered by the bill. However, we do have a concern regarding implementation of the proposal as it is currently drafted.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Animal Defenders International, Christina Scaringe, General Counsel

Support HB 5293. It's narrowly drafted cost effective, and efficient way to safeguard animals, workers, and the public from cruel and dangerous traveling wild animal acts.

Jo Anne Basile, Executive Director, CT Votes for Animals

CVA strongly supports HB 5293, with modifications. CVA Board member Karen Laski will testify and articulate our concerns about the need to close a loophole in the raised bill.

Enid Breakstone, M.Ed., Executive Director, The Queenie Foundation

We support HB5293 because its time to end the use of wild animals in traveling shows. There are 111 partial or full bans on performing animals in jurisdictions in the US, in 34 states. Approximately, 35 countries have implemented a ban or restriction regarding the use of animals for entertainment.

Liz Cabrera Holtz, Esq., Wildlife Campaign Manager, World Animal Protection

Animals used in circuses and traveling acts are deprived of the ability to engage in their natural behaviors, resulting in severe physical and psychological suffering. Traveling acts and circuses that use animals also pose serious risks to public health and safety. Action at the state level is urgently needed.

Courtney Fern, Director of Government Relations, Nonhuman Rights Project

States across the nation are moving to prevent circuses and other traveling animal acts from exploiting animals. This is an urgently needed step to help protect elephants, nonhuman primates, and other wild animals from human caused harm.

Ann Gadwah, Advocacy and Outreach Organizer, Sierra Club Connecticut

Sierra Club supports HB5923 but we suggest changing the definition of wild and exotic animal in section (1), © (3) to include animals from any of the following classifications, including hybrids with the following classifications, whether born in the wild or bred in captivity: Canidae (except domestic dogs), cetartiodactyla, crocodylian, edentata, elasmobranchil, felidea (except domestic cats) hyaenidae, marsupialia, nonhuman primates, perissodactyla (except donkeys, horses, mules, and ponies), pinnipedian, Procyonidae, ratites, spheniscidae, Ursidae, Varanidae, and Viverridae.

Annie Hornish, Connecticut Senior State Director, The Humane Society of the US

We support with Amendment HB 5293.Suggested amendments: 1. Line 33, remove "...any animal that is not domesticated.." 2. Line 17, replace "C" with "R". Research facilities, as well as universities or colleges that conduct research using animals, do not hold class C exhibitor licenses, but rather class R licenses. A class C license is for exhibitors, i.e., circuses, traveling tiger, bear and sea lion shows. Etc.

Catherine Doyle, MS., Director of Science, Research and Advocacy, PAWS

Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) directly cares for captive elephants, big cats, bears, and other wild animals and we strongly urge you to support HB5293. Animal acts do not educate children or help conserve endangered species. Rather, they distort the public's perception of wild animals and their imperiled status in the wild.

Melanie Lary, Research and Campaigns Officer, FOUR PAWS

HB 5293 would provide captive wild animals in Connecticut with the necessary and overdue protection against cruelty. Stuck in inhospitable conditions, these wild animals are forced to adapt to abnormal surroundings and perform unnatural behaviors.

John Madigan, Steering Committee Chair, Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance

BCSA supports HB 5293 to protect the animals and the public. Wild animal acts do not educate the public or help conservations efforts. There is no educational value in displaying big cats who have been denied all that is natural to them and are forced through coercion to perform tricks.

Thompson G. Page, General Counsel The Center Animal Litigation

Supports HB 5293 This is the foundation of the ethics and morals which banning the inhumane treatment of animals in zoo and traveling shows would uphold.

Leah Haut, Bridgeport, CT

I am the individual who spearheaded the successful campaign for a city pan on the use of wild and exotic animals in Bridgeport, CT in 2018, which was passed unanimously by the 19 members of its City Council. Thank you for your support of this legislation. Cruelty to animals does not provide wholesome family entertainment, nor does it provide any educational content whatsoever.

Over 75 Citizens sent in letters of support for HB 5293

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Tim Commerford, R.W. Commerford & Sons

We oppose HB 5293. R.W, Commerford and Sons have been in the animal industry exotic and domesticated for over 60 years in CT. We take great pride in exhibiting our animals for all type of venues. This ill will be detrimental to the family farm here in Goshen CT. The education of seeing these magnificent animals would be lost because the best way to raise awareness is to physically see, touch, and interact with them.

Michael Z. Siavakas, Owner, New England Herpetoculture

We oppose HB5293 because as its written will prevent my experienced and well qualified team from offering Animal Education Programs to public school students. The way the bill is written will destroy animal education in the state of Connecticut.

Warren H. Treacher, President, Sun Mountain Oil and Gas,

This bill is far-reaching and rife with unintended consequences, including making criminals out of dedicated individuals who responsibly conduct educational programs with animals

Phil Gross, United States Association of Reptile Keepers

USARK is a fierce advocate for responsible animal ownership. It is unreasonable to punish those engaging in conscientious animal husbandry and outreach with such misguided attempt to crack down upon those who are negligent. Traveling and teaching with animals is not in any way inherently cruel when done responsibly. Ambassador animals featured in educational presentations that are kept under human care by respectable wardens are not living a life of suffering.

13 Citizens sent in letters of opposition to HB5293

Reported by: Judith Ganswindt

Date: April 5, 2022