



FOR THE RECORD

Wildlife Conservation Society
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MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Int. 1233a (Mendez)

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) supports Int. 1233a, a bill that would amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to prohibiting the display of wild and exotic animal performances in circuses.

Founded in 1895, WCS is a global conservation organization based at the Bronx Zoo with a mission to save wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. Our New York City-based conservation work is achieved through our network of Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited zoos and an aquarium that connect over 4 million annual visitors to nature; inspire them to advocate for wildlife; and for some, pursue STEM careers. Our cutting edge exhibits collectively house more than 14,000 animals, many of which are part of endangered species breeding programs. WCS has a long history as a leader in the zoo and aquarium profession providing the best husbandry and state of the art exhibition of wild animals in our parks, ensuring the highest standard of care.

WCS is opposed to exhibiting wild or exotic animals solely for entertainment purposes in traveling circuses. Int. 1233a defines circus as “any live show or carnival which, along with clown, acrobatic, or stunt performances, features performances by live wild or exotic animals that, in order to be able to perform, have traveled in mobile housing facilities or were taken from their permanent residence and required to travel for any distance.”

Many circus animals are forced to perform unnatural or dangerous behaviors and have a substandard quality of life due to traveling and housing conditions. Int. 1233a would set a policy standard for the humane treatment of captive animals by prohibiting the display of wild or exotic animals in circuses. This bill represents progressive animal welfare reform that would showcase New York City’s leadership role on this issue.

For more information, please contact Christina Manto, Senior Manager, U.S. Policy and Advocacy, (718) 220-6889, cmanto@wcs.org.



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MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

NYC Intro. 1233A

Council Members Mendez, Johnson, Palma, Cabrera, Dromm, Koslowitz, Williams, Rodriguez, Rosenthal, Gibson, Torres, Cohen, Levin, Vacca, Cornegy, Richards, Reynoso, Salamanca, Menchaca, Espinal, Ferreras-Copeland, Chin, Lander, Gentile, Van Bramer, Levine, Perkins, Cumbo, Maisel, Garodnick, Grodenchik, Vallone, Treyger, Ulrich, Public Advocate James

ESHV supports the enactment of NYC Intro. 1233A to prohibit the use of wild or exotic animals in circuses. The use of wild animals in circuses is inhumane and a serious risk to public safety. Intro. 1233A is needed because current laws do not adequately protect animals and people from the cruelty and safety risks posed by the use of wild animals in circuses in New York City.

In the wild elephants do not perform headstands, bears do not balance on balls, and tigers do not jump through rings of fire. Circus animals are forced to perform these unnatural tricks under threat of physical punishment. Numerous undercover investigations have demonstrated widespread use of brutal and abusive training techniques for circus animals including shocking with electric prods, and beatings with metal bars, baseball bats, whips, pitchforks and hooked rods known as bullhooks.¹ Animals may also be drugged or have their teeth or claws surgically removed. When they are not being forced to perform, circus animals endure extensive travel – sometimes 11 months out of the year – in cramped trailers where they are often chained and isolated for long durations and denied exercise and other natural behavioral needs. This unnatural confinement leads to further psychological and physical trauma.

The use of wild animals in circuses poses a serious risk to public safety. Wild animals by nature can act instinctively and unpredictably. Factoring in the additional and chronic stress caused by the abusive training methods and conditions of captivity, there is a high risk that these animals may attempt to attack or escape. Wild animals may also carry serious transmittable diseases and infections, including tuberculosis. Current local, state, and federal law does not adequately protect circus animals from cruelty or protect the public from the dangers posed by these animals. Indeed many of the circuses that routinely perform in NYC have been repeatedly cited for violations of the Animal Welfare Act and have been documented engaging in egregious animal cruelty in undercover video investigations.

Greenburgh, NY, Plattsburgh, NY and Southampton, NY have already enacted local laws to ban the use of wild animals in circuses and a many other states and municipalities in the U.S. and around the globe have enacted done the same. It's time for NYC to prioritize humane treatment of animals and protecting public safety by enacting Intro. 1233A.

Contact: ESHV Executive Director, Allie Taylor at allie@eshv.org

¹ Examples of undercover video footage documenting these abusive training methods is available at Last Chance for Animals, Ban Circus Animals, <http://www.lcanimal.org/index.php/campaigns/elephants/circuses> and *Ringling Bros. -Elephant Child Abusers-Breaking A Baby Elephant*, YouTube, Jan. 31, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDMYEHY6ELs>.