

March 16, 2023

Oregon State Legislature  
House Committee on the Judiciary

**Re: Testimony in support of HB 3214, *Relating to traveling animal acts***

Dear House Judiciary Committee Members,

On behalf of World Animal Protection and our Oregon supporters, we appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 3214, *Relating to traveling animal acts*.

This bill is critically needed to protect wild animals from being forced to perform in exploitative traveling acts. It's also important to note what this bill would *not* do.

- The bill does not impact jobs in Oregon because the use of wild animals in traveling acts has largely been phased out in favor of performances that use human talent and technology to entertain crowds. For example, due to growing public awareness of the cruelty that elephants endure in circuses, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus ended the use of elephant acts in 2016 and then shut down entirely in 2017, citing shift public opinion. Notably, Ringling Bros. is slated to return this fall, **without animals**, with shows already scheduled.
- This bill explicitly exempts animals used in education programs, where people merely learn about animals. HB 3214 is aimed at protecting animals forced to perform and entertain crowds, such as through rides or tricks.

World Animal Protection is a global nonprofit organization that exposes destructive, exploitative, and cruel systems and provides practical and achievable solutions. Working across almost 50 countries with offices in 12, the organization's activities focus on: exposing cruel systems, promoting, and supporting animal-friendly alternatives, influencing legislation for policy change, and campaigning to mobilize grass-roots influence.

### **Animals in Traveling Acts Suffer**

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. Wild animals are typically held in small, barren cages without appropriate enrichment or socialization with other members of their species. Animals are forced to sleep, defecate, and eat in the same small space. Decades of research has documented that wild animals living in captivity experience osteoarthritis, obesity, and dental problems. Recent research indicates that the prolonged stress of captivity results in actual physical changes in brain structure and function.<sup>1</sup> As a result, wild animals frequently display stereotypes—repetitive, purposeless behaviors or sounds such as pacing, head bobbing, licking of non-food objects, and gnawing on bars.

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<sup>1</sup> Bob Jacobs. [The neural cruelty of captivity: Keeping large mammals in zoos and aquariums damages their brains.](#) The Conversation, September 24, 2020.

By their nature, traveling acts require animals to be transported for long distances throughout the year. Animals are sometimes transported without climate control and subjected to extreme hot and cold temperatures that they would never experience in the wild. Further, “trainers” coerce wild animals to perform unnatural tricks and stunts through abusive methods including physical violence, sedation, restraints, and the withholding of food.

### **Wild Animal Acts Jeopardize Public Safety**

Traveling acts and circuses that use animals also pose serious risks to public health and safety. Wild animals are unpredictable and difficult to safely constrain, particularly for traveling shows that rely on collapsible and portable equipment. Year after year, captive wild animals injure and even kill members of the public, traveling act employees, and law enforcement officials. For example, in 2016, an animal trainer was attacked and dragged by a tiger in front of a school field trip at the Pensacola Interstate Fair in Florida.<sup>2</sup>

Wild animals in captivity are also a zoonotic disease risk. Species such as primates can spread deadly infections to humans including tuberculosis, Herpes B, and campylobacteriosis. Elephants can spread tuberculosis, and humans have tested positive for tuberculosis after interacting with infected captive elephants. In 2015, the Dallas County Health and Human Services Department barred two elephants with the UniverSoul Circus from entering after the elephants were exposed to the extremely contagious virus.<sup>3</sup>

### **Lack of Meaningful Federal Regulation**

Action at the state level is urgently needed. The federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA), which regulates wild animal exhibitors such as zoos and circuses, sets out only minimal requirements for animal care and is chronically underenforced. Notably, the AWA permits painful “training” methods such as bullhooks (fire poker-like devices used to jab elephants in the most sensitive parts of their bodies), whips, and electrical shocks.

Wild animals in traveling acts spend most of their days in tiny cages, hauled from city to city where they’re forced to perform unnatural—and even painful—tricks and stunts. HB 3214 would protect wild animals from cruelty in Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration.



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<sup>2</sup> Troy Moon. [Fair tiger show canceled after trainer injured](#). Pensacola News Journal, October 25, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Wilonsky. [TB or not TB: Judge sides with Dallas officials banning circus elephants over health concerns](#). The Dallas Morning News, August 19, 2015.