

June 11, 2018

Assemblymen Steven Englebright and Carl Heastie
Legislative Office Building
198 State Street
Albany, NY 12248

Senator Phil Boyle
Legislative Office Building
198 State Street
Albany, NY 12247

Senator John Flanagan
State Capitol Building
198 State Street
Albany, NY 12207

Re: Letter of Support from Born Free USA on State Bills A.8157-A and S.7718-A

Dear Assemblyman Englebright, Assemblyman Heastie, Senator Boyle, and Senator Flanagan,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of support. My name is Prashant K. Khetan, Esq., and I am the CEO and General Counsel of Born Free USA, a non-profit organization that seeks to end the suffering of wild animals in captivity, rescue individual animals in need, and protect wildlife in their natural habitats – by keeping wildlife in the wild and encouraging compassionate conservation globally. Born Free is an industry leader on the issues of animals in entertainment, including wild animal acts with the circus or roadside zoos and exotic animal rides, having devoted years to advocating for the end of using wild animals for entertainment. We have conducted numerous investigations into circus acts, roadside zoos, and menageries, as well as track substandard conditions at zoos and exotic animal incidents throughout the United States for approximately 30 years.

On behalf of Born Free and its New York supporters, we would like to support the proposed State Bills A.8157-A and S.7718-A, an amendment the environmental conservation law to prohibit the issuance of permits authorizing the use of wild animals in circuses. As you are no doubt aware, wild animals are abused and exploited in a variety of forms for entertainment. These wild animals are caged and chained in trucks and trailers that are not of adequate size, endure months of grueling travel every year, and are routinely denied adequate exercise and the opportunity to express natural behaviors; therefore, they continually exhibit signs of severe and chronic stress.

Furthermore, wild animals in circuses, roadside zoos, and menageries are forced into a role of “unwilling performer” by training methods that are associated with pain, fear of punishment, and being bullied to perform unnatural and silly tricks. These training methods are used to ensure that tricks are consistently

performed, punish the animal when they fail to perform a trick, and to control the animal during routine handling.

Born Free was one of the groups that successfully advocated for the 2017 prohibition on the use of elephants in circus acts and performances, but we must extend this law to other wild animals. See State Bills A.464b and S.2098b. Wild animal acts are no longer considered good old-fashioned family entertainment. Public opinion on wild animal acts is shifting, whereby prompting action from local governments to put an end to this brutal and outdated practice. As of June 2018, four states and at least 135 U.S. municipalities have passed legislation addressing this issue, while many other localities are considering similar measures.

Due to Born Free's extensive knowledge of wild animals in entertainment, we respectfully request your support of State Bills A.8157-A and S.7718-A.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Prashant K. Khetan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Prashant K. Khetan
Chief Executive Officer & General Counsel
Born Free USA
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Phone: (202) 450-3168