

Statement of Karen Laski, Board of Directors CT Votes for Animals, in Support of SB 413 before the Environment Committee, March 16, 2020.

My name is Karen Laski and I live in Manchester CT. I am a member of the Board of Directors of representing CT Votes for Animals, an organization with more than 5000 members across the State of Connecticut; CVA strongly supports passage of SB 413.

I have been documenting animals in traveling shows for 26 years and working on bills similar to SB 413 since 2005. What follows are my experiences and observations from filming these traveling acts. The inherent brutality of circuses is the deprivation of natural behaviors the animals experience every day of their lives. What I have witnessed behind the scenes is horrendous. There is no question that animal acts are a cruel and unnecessary business. Elephants for example, can't even take an essential mud bath as they are hosed down to look pretty and any dust is blown off of them. Wild animals need to walk and run which they need for proper digestion, exercise and psychological well-being. Being shackled and caged causes animals to develop neurotic behaviors like pacing, head bobbing, self-mutilation, depression and aggression that can end up dangerous for the humans that surround them. There have been many incidents of wild animals injuring trainers or spectators because they were scared or traumatized. Animals can't be animals and their lives are forever bleak.

You can't train a wild animal with positive reinforcement so they are beaten until they are broken. This intimidation continues as long as the animals are used, often for many decades. I witnessed a baby elephant being traumatized so she wouldn't defecate in the ring during

the show. While hiding under a truck I saw several circus workers surround the baby and stomp their feet while yelling till she defecated right there. Another time a circus worker was loading llamas on to a trailer. One llama was appeared to be frightened and would not go up the ramp. The man used something in his hand, and stuck it into the llama's vagina. She bolted forward. There is a The following link here is for a short compilation of videos I've done and that I narrated which makes it easy to see what animals experience in traveling animals shows. Please watch even just a bit to understand what they are going through. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JymEZe3LdBE> Nothing has changed for them in all these years. They suffer endlessly emotionally and physically and many times die a miserable death from an untreated, long standing ailment.

What do children learn through these displays of insensitivity? What are they thinking when they are at a fair in Guilford watching bears ride horses?

People have become more aware of the callous treatment of animals in traveling acts and parents now understand how children learn a warped view of nature by watching wild animals performing silly tricks. Many schools, churches, charities and businesses in CT have agreed not to host animal acts. In CT, Bristol Commons, Goodyear Tire, the Red Cross, Western CT State University, Manchester school district and Manchester Community Technical College have said no to animal acts as well. Three years ago the Yard Goats cancelled an act of monkeys riding dogs because of the public outcry. We are hopeful that this committee will follow suit after you watch the film footage and listen to all the testimony on behalf of the animals by people who have no other agenda other than to see that these animals who have suffered for so

long are enabled to live out their lives in peace at sanctuaries that are awaiting them.

The animal entertainment industry in CT has been dwindling as more people understand its inherent cruelty. SB 413 reflects the moral judgement of the majority of the State's residents. CVA and I personally want to thank the Committee for raising this bill. It is a long time coming.

Thank you.

Karen Laski