

FACTS - OPPOSE BILL NO. 23-17:

- The Montgomery County Fairgrounds relies on rental income and providing unique educational shows and attractions throughout the year and during the county Fair. Passage of Bill 23-17 by the Montgomery County Council will most likely be followed for passage by the City of Gaithersburg. When passage by the City occurs, these business activities will become illegal.
- There are many statutes that govern safe and humane treatment and of animals in place at the US Department of Agriculture, State of Maryland and the Montgomery County Department of Animal Control to ensure that abuse does not occur.
- These animals are frequently born in captivity or rescued from inappropriate environments and cannot be released into the wild as animal rights activists suggest. They are unprepared for life in the wild and would suffer a cruel death if released from the care they deserve.
- It is imperative that we foster education, appreciation and a safe learning environment about these majestic creatures through licensed, regulated, safe and inspected traveling exhibits.
- Opportunities to visit the National Zoo, Baltimore Zoo or other preserves may be too far or too costly for low income residents in Montgomery County to afford.
- Today, we are facing the threat of extinction for a variety of animal species. Without providing exposure and education about them in local communities, many citizens will not be educated to understand the importance of conservation efforts underway to preserve at risk species.
- Exotic animal owners and exhibitors are providing an important scientific and educational link in protecting the survival of these species who are under attack or in some cases already extinct in their native environments.
- Eliminating access to exotic animals provided by exhibitors would take away affordable options for residents in Montgomery County reducing education opportunities to learn about, and interact with, some of the world's most iconic animals.
- It has become commonplace to believe that humane treatment is not exercised by caretakers of performing animals and exhibits, but that could not be further from the truth. Performing animals are well respected and are provided with a life full of excellent medical care, environmental stimulation, and top-notch husbandry practices all of which are already currently heavily regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA)
- The regulations that come from animal rights groups invariably have unintended consequences and hurt the very communities and citizens that they are intended to help.
- Rather than focus on prosecuting owners that are being abusive and mistreating animals, the HSUS is encouraging the development of complex legislation to prevent legal ownership and display of these animals. This action exposes their long-term intention that includes banning animal ownership and creating a meat free society. If HSUS is successful, their initiatives regarding animal ownership and food sources will ban animals at the Fair.
- Enforcement of existing animal cruelty laws is the best path to follow.