

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 543

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & LIVESTOCK

Hearing Date: March 18, 2021 8:00 AM

Nicole Watkins

Self - Business Manager

Georgetown, TX

I strongly oppose this bill. Texas needs to ban companies who abuse animals for entertainment and profit. Specifically, bull hooks and electric devices to frighten wildlife into behaving and performing. Animals should be trained with love and understanding, not by force. Please do not approve this bill.

Connie Brown

Self

Corpus, TX

Im against this bill. Animals do not need to be beaten to perform. Its horrible the conditions and abuse these creatures endure from cruel owners.. This needs to end!!

Lou Ann Ashmore, Mrs.

Self - Former Elementary School Substitute Teacher - Pandemic Laid off Administrative Assistant in the College System.

Mesquite, TX

Regarding bull hook use on "Working animals". I believe the bill should be fine tuned to separate agriculture animals from wild animals being used for entertainment. Typically elephants and other wild animals must be tortured and/or have food and water withheld in order for them to do the tricks the trainer wants them to do. It is not natural for them to give people rides, stand on one foot or other such tricks. Bull hooks are horrible and elephants are afraid of them. These animals are often not looked after medically as they are seen as money making machines and not living beings. They end up with bad feet, arthritis and painful sores which are not attended to. No animal should have to live like that. Please ban the use of bullhooks on wild animals being used for entertainment purposes. Many other states have already done this giving the small circuses few places to go, which is what's best for the animals. Thank you.

Sherry Kreye

self

LAKEWAY, TX

I wholeheartedly oppose HB543 by Representative White because it includes elephants in the bill. There is absolutely no reason that a bullhook should be used on an elephant and The Preserve has a history of abuse on these same elephants that they brought with them from California. There is an eight-minute undercover video on YouTube that shows them beating their elephants when they were under the name Have Trunks Will Travel. You don't need to watch more than 30 seconds to see the cruelty they inflicted day in and day out on these elephants. Animal abuse should never be tolerated and Austin and the State of Texas should never allow it. I urge you to do your homework on the Preserve, formerly known as Haver Trunks Will Travel so that you may see the full extent of how evil these owners, The Johnsons are. Thank you.

Wendy Dearing

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Action for Animals Austin

Buda, TX

Please do NOT consider HB 543 in allowing HOOKS to control/ ABUSE working animals. This was removed for a reason. Animals do NOT need to be abused to do work and/ or perform for humans. Animals, especially Elephants, are intelligent creatures so ABUSE towards them should NEVER be accepted. If you would NOT use these items on your pets why would you allow them to be used against domestic animals?

Thank you for being a VOICE for animals and stopping this abuse from starting.

Stephanie Putnam

Self Biologist

Austin, TX

Please oppose this bill and allow regulation to occur at the local level

Elizabeth Bodley

Self

Fort Worth, TX

I'm filing public comment today to OPPOSE H.B. 543. Local governments are the most well-suited to understand how industries and businesses using animals impact their communities and are the best able to decide whether the public health and safety risks associated with many animal industries are too great for their local resources to properly manage. I believe that my local elected officials and experts should be able to make decisions for my community about these important issues and respectfully request that the committee vote NO on HB 543."

Becky Hardin

Self - Student

FLORESVILLE, TX

I am filing a public comment today to OPPOSE H.B. 543. Local governments are the most well-suited to understand how industries and businesses using animals impact their communities and are the best able to decide whether the public health and safety risks associated with many animal industries are too great for their local resources to properly manage. I believe that my local elected officials and experts should be able to make decisions for my community about these important issues and respectfully request that the committee vote NO on HB 543.

Shannon Sims

City of San Antonio Animal Care Services

San Antonio, TX

March 9, 2021

The Honorable DeWayne Burns

P.O Box 2910

Austin, Texas 78768

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RE: HB 543 – Relating to the Regulation of Working Animals by a Political Subdivision

Dear Chairman Burns,

The City of San Antonio's Animal Care Services (ACS) is strongly opposed to HB 543. This legislation endangers the health and wellbeing of not only working animals, but the people who come into contact with them. San Antonio has a rich history with working animals, from cattle drives to carriage rides, ACS and the City embrace the joy and enrichment that animals bring to visitors and residents alike. The protection offered by local law enforcement's K-9 Units and Mounted Officers is irreplaceable. ACS' position comes not from prejudice, but rather from prudence.

The language of HB 543 is vague, except in the area where local authority is stripped away. The definition of what constitutes a "working animal" is generic to the point that it applies to any creature used for any purpose other than food. There is no definition for "undue financial hardship", leaving extensive opportunity for litigation opposing any type of protective or preventative measures that a local authority may take against the treatment of or the danger imposed by a working animal. Ultimately, this legislation renders municipal governments and county leadership impotent in what could easily develop into a public safety and animal welfare nightmare. Every day people are maimed and killed by animals, the most common attackers being the animals we keep in our homes. Allowing animals such as elephants, bison, tigers, and other exotics into communities unregulated can and will lead to injury and the death of San Antonio residents and visitors. Everyday animals are abused, overworked, and killed for the profit or entertainment of their owners. Removing the protection that regulation offers these animals will lead to animals in horrific conditions and long-term suffering in the name of profit. HB 543 should not be passed in the interest of public safety and simple human kindness.

Respectfully,

Shannon W. Sims, Interim Director

Animal Care Services

City of San Antonio

nita andersen, ms

Self

Austin, TX

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officials and experts should be able to make decisions for my community about these important issues and respectfully request that the committee vote NO on HB 543.

Terri Palleschi

self

Plano, TX

I am writing to publicly oppose HB 1480.No city should be unable to vote on a health and safety issue pertaining to animal welfare especially when it pertains to their community. Therefore, I highly oppose this bill

Karin Dahlstrom

Self

Austin, TX

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maribel perez

self

arlington, TX

i oppose this stupid bill

Melinda Pharr

Elephants Austin Nonprofit

Austin, TX

I am not in support of HB 543. Rep. White's working animals bill would overturn any local bull hook regulations, including the City of Austin's bull hook ban. Please, this is a walk backwards for these sentient beings. The bull hook is an archaic training tool and is used for beating elephants into submission such as the elephants out at the Hill Country Preserve.

Thank you for your time.

Erick Clark

Self

Austin, TX

I oppose this bill. It will allow for the inhumane treatment and abuse of exotic animals such as elephants.

Kayla Murray

self

AUSTIN, TX

Please vote NO on HB 543. It would take away vital protections needed for elephants who are forced to live, perform, and entertain in Texas under the guise of "sanctuary."

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Kerstin Freedell

Self

Woodcreek, TX

Bull hooks should be illegal, the animals are suffering. The elephants at the so called sanctuary in Stonewall, TX should be taken to an actual sanctuary and removed from their owners!!!

Annette Mittenthal

Self/Retired

Frisco, TX

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gwendoline courreges

self / private tutor

Austin, TX

Stop the abuse of animals!

Chrisitne ybarra

myself

austin, TX

I am against HB 543

Erin DeWitt

Self - athlete

Driftwood, TX

I urge you to vote No on HB 543. Texas is better than this. We must not remove the protections given to working animals. We were lauded for our compassion when we banned the bullhook. Going back on it now and removing all animal protections will say unequivocally that Texas is accepting of physical abuse of animals for entertainment and profit. No one should ever use violence in order to coerce a vulnerable creature into submission. I ask you to please let logic and kindness be your guide. Vote no on HB 543, and solidify the truth that Texans will not stand for animal abuse.

Jon Weist, Legislative Officer

City of Irving

Irving, TX

Good morning

Please find below some concerns the City of Irving has related to HB 543, the elimination of local government regulation of working animals.

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HB 543 is very broad, and doesn't allow local jurisdictions to discourage practices that residents find problematic for their community. Puppy mills, animals left in hot cars, animals brought in for specific events – such as elephants for weddings – are all concerns in our local communities.

In addition, traveling animal shows, wild animal show and other forms of entertainment involving exotic animals would be present in the community without any knowledge of a potential threat to residents' safety or disease brought into the community. HB 543 would not allow a city to regulate its own police horse patrols or canine units.

Local jurisdictions are better equipped to evaluate the level of activity of these and many other situations, including accounting for traffic control around public entertainment and the conditions in which animal breeding may be allowed, or limited, in a city.

Please oppose HB 543.

Nicole Korensky

Self

Austin, TX

Thank you for taking the time to read my comment. I have been an elephant advocate for many years, traveling across the world to see elephants in the wild and follow their journeys at Certified Sanctuaries. I am an Education Volunteer with the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. I have educated over 2000 students throughout Austin schools about conservation and elephants. I know elephants. I support this bill because I know the intelligence an elephant has, the social awareness, the sense of family dynamics within an elephant herd. Elephants are not meant to entertain humans. The only way people in the US know how to train an elephant is through abuse and torture. Many times it is with a bullhook-a sharp, pointed object (like a fire poker), used to poke, hit and beat an elephant. When a bullhook is in view of an elephant when they are performing, it is a reminder of the abuse. Many people say when they visit places that use elephants to entertain, they don't see abuse, yet they don't realize that what they are witnessing IS abuse because the elephant is forced to perform uncomfortable, unusual and unnatural positions and stunts for entertainment. And when a trainer is holding a bullhook-that is a reminder to the animal that if they do NOT perform appropriately, they will be poked, prodded and maybe even later abused. They live their daily lives in fear.

Another reason I believe animals should not be used for entertainment (performing, riding, etc) is for safety reasons. There always should be a barrier, preferably a large fence between a human and an elephant. IN Texas, at places such as "The Preserve" in Gillespie County, I have seen humans with babies stand next to an elephant that ways at least 3 tons! I've seen people at "The Preserve" stand as a group next to FIVE elephants with no trainers or anyone near them! This is SOOO dangerous! One swipe of the elephants trunk, that baby and/or adult could be dead! As a Community, I would be concerned! I can only imagine the law suit the City or State would get if someone was hurt at one of these Wild parks. It is Never safe to have humans next to wild animals, including Tigers and Lions!

Please be compassionate and support this bill. No one needs to see animals perform, as we can see with circuses closing across the US, it is not a popular event. There are many different activities families can attend without having to interact with animals. Thank you for your support!

NORA ROMO

SELF

FORT WORTH, TX

NO MORE ABUSE FOR ANIMALS

Jennifer Forbes-Watkins

HSUS Texas Allies

Bryan, TX

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Thank you,
Jennifer

Carolyn Boydston

Self

Blanco, TX

Elephant hooks should not be allowed. Nor should elephants be forced to perform for the amusement of humans.

Debbie Ellis

self

Fredericksburg, TX

This bill would overturn any local bull hook regulations, including the City of Austin. This bill would give no protection to working animals, which they so need.

I therefore OPPOSE this bill for the safety and the concerns of all working animals in our great state of Texas.

Tinita Harpel

VINYL Beauty Bar

Austin, TX

Stop the abuse! Speak up for animals with no voice. Places like "The Preserve" in Texas are abusing animals with bull hooks when they've been outlawed in other states. Sanctuaries in Texas are allowed to operate for profit in the name of entertainment while still abusing and letting animals die in their care as a result of this abuse. This is extremely misleading, hurtful, and wrong for everyone in our community and the state. You have been given this enormous duty to protect not only the people of this state, but the innocent abused animals as well. Their lives are in your hands!

Michael Harpel

Self

Austin, TX

Stop the abuse!

Sylvia Shelton

Self, marketing

Hutto, TX

Please don't allow HB 543 to move forward. There is absolutely no reason to allow anyone to hurt these majestic beasts.

Allen Jensen

self Engineer

Austin, TX

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Localities should be allowed to regulate businesses within their own area. Texas is a big place, what is good for an animal in the panhandle may not be good for it in central Texas. In the end, government is local. Let it remain so.

Mary Burger

Self

Austin, TX

We protect dogs and cats that provide us joy and comfort, yet we allow the elephants located in a “preserve” to be “confined,” used, beaten and tortured by bull whips and poles just so they can entertain us? This against humanity and decency and an embarrassment to all of Texas.

Deanna DeShea

Self

Austin, TX

Animals are not entertainment & should not suffer abuse and neglect for human folly. Texas can do better. VOTE NO on HB 543.

Katie Jarl, Executive Director

Texas Pets Alive!

San Antonio, TX

On behalf of Texas Pets Alive!, I am writing to oppose HB 543. The language of this bill is extremely broad and opens the door for a variety of legal interpretations. This language could apply to a wide range of animal issues. The leadership of our state have clearly laid out in statute the roles and responsibilities of animal advisory boards and commissions to address animal welfare concerns as they impact communities and the process for passing local regulations on animals is a true reflection of years of stakeholder and community input to best address the specific concerns of those communities. We hope the spirit of that important process in statute is not undermined with the passage of HB 543 and we respectfully ask that the members of the committee vote against it.

Natalie Thomas

Self

Austin, TX

Please vote NO for this bill.

Ivan Villa

Self

Austin, TX

I would like to remove the use of hook in the preserve at Fredericksburg

Christina Garza

Self

Pflugerville, TX

I, along with my family, wholeheartedly oppose this bill. It is mind boggling that we have to fight to keep a bill that will allow

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tools that cause physical pain and emotional distress to animals but alas, it's 2021 and here we still are. Humans who support this bill are incredibly disappointing.

Judy Hofer, Ms.

Self—Retired.

Georgetown, TX

We are an advanced country unlike some around the world that still use a bullhook. A few years ago my granddaughter gave a speech to the Austin City Council that we hope had a role in banning it in Austin. That was a good thing. The hook is an ancient and cruel tool used towards animals. I can't really think where an animal would be used in construction or the like here. The idea of using it to train baby or full grown animals for our entertainment is downright painful and hideous. If your intention is to reinstate the use of bullhooks then I urge you to please reconsider this proposal.

Thank you.

Judy Hofer

Ciera Garza

N/A

Round Rock, TX

Sick

Lindsey Harris

Self, professional soccer player

Houston, TX

Vote no

Carisa Garza

N/A

Round Rock, TX

VOTE NO

Christine Nguyen

Self

Houston, TX

I am a Texan and I am against bill 543. It will negate city regulations that help protect working animals who are subject to abuse and cruelty. As humans it is our job to be HUMANE. Working animals serve mankind and deserve a certain standard of treatment as a matter of common decency. Vote NO on HB 543!

Lizette Carrasco

self

Austin, TX

I am not in support of HB 543 and I ask this committee to please vote no. This bill puts citizens in danger of being harmed by an animal. The communities of Texas should be able to decide and vote on which regulations, ordinances and/or policies are best

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suiting for their communities taking into account many factors; public safety and health being one of the most important. Many communities not only are concerned for their own citizens but are also showing concerns for certain types of animals used in the ways mentioned in this bill. Statistics prove that working animals used in entertainment have become a growing concern for the entire country, resulting in localized ordinances, stricter regulations and policies. The Cavalry Group claims to be against animal abuse yet oppose any and all legislation which clearly is written to protect animals from cruelty and neglect. The opposition's only interest is benefitting financially from animals, which in itself is mostly acceptable in society, what is not acceptable in society is animal abuse and cruelty. Yes, a lot of these practices they claim are very old practices yet many societies are moving towards becoming more civilized and with that leaving no room for cruelty or exploitation. I live in Austin and am proud to say my city has move forward with banning the bull hook which means no elephant will ever be allowed to perform or entertain within the city limits which is a reflection of our community in accepting that elephants are not intended for that purpose, that is not why they were put on this planet, the same way animals were not put on this planet to be used in sexual acts so let me remind you that The Cavalry Group opposes any legislation having to do with bestiality. I am proud and grateful that this state banned this horrendous practice in 2017. Leaving the question, do they consider the animals used in these acts, working animals or animals used in entertainment.

Brian Rodgers

Self - Real Estate Developer

Austin, TX

The Cavalry Group is national lobbying group with an extremist State-by-State Legislative Agenda that supports bestiality, opposes the Good Samaritan law of smashing a car window to free a dying dog in a hot car, supports the painful declawing of cats, supports reduced penalties for animal cruelty, opposes requiring vets to report animal cruelty, opposes wildlife corridors, opposes actions to protect dogs in extreme weather conditions.

Don't take my word for it, read their 67 page national agenda, right out of the cruel 19th century ideal of man vs beast.

<https://www.thecavalrygroup.com/resources/Documents/Cavalry%20Group%20Word%202021%20Master%20List.pdf>

Let Texans and Texas towns and cities decide their own. Don't let them take away local control. Vote NO on HB 543