



To: Agriculture Chesapeake and Natural Resources, Agriculture Subcommittee
From: Animal Legal Defense Fund
Re: Support Letter for HB 2483
Date: January 25, 2023

Dear Chair Webert and the Agriculture Subcommittee:

The Animal Legal Defense Fund is the nation's preeminent legal advocacy organization for animals and has been working for over four decades to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. On behalf of our thousands of members and supporters in Virginia, I respectfully ask that you support HB 2483, which would prohibit the use of bullhooks and other implements designed to inflict pain on elephants.

Bullhooks, and other pain-inflicting instruments used to control and punish elephants, cause extreme physical injury and trauma, as well as psychological stress and suffering. When using bullhooks, it is common for trainers to target the most sensitive areas of an elephant's skin, such as the soft tissue behind the ears, inside the mouth and under the chin to cause more severe pain and gain complete dominance and control over elephants. This causes immediate, acute pain, but it also results in lasting physical injuries, including puncture wounds and lacerations that can lead to serious infection if left untreated.

Two states, dozens of municipalities, and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums have prohibited the use of bullhooks. By their very design, bullhooks are inhumane and they are completely unnecessary; more humane methods of training, such as positive reinforcement, have been shown to be effective and safer for both elephants and trainers.

Elephants are already forced to endure the stress and pain inherent in captivity and performance. They do not deserve to be further injured, threatened, and abused by bullhooks and similar training instruments. This kind of violent conditioning should be prohibited.

HB 2483 is a commonsense bill that will protect elephants from suffering. Please support this important legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alicia Prygoski
Strategic Legislative Affairs Manager
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Alexandria, VA
(202) 710-6031