



Montgomery County Farm Bureau

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The Honorable Roger Berliner, President

Montgomery County Council

100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor

Rockville, Maryland 20850

13 July 2017

Dear Mr. Berliner:

The Montgomery County Farm Bureau opposes Bill 23-17. We believe it is an unnecessary and ineffective piece of legislation. The worries and concerns over protecting “wild animals” by prohibiting the exhibition and/or compensation for such exhibition is misplaced legislation. Bill 23-17’s states: “The goal is to remove the financial incentive for displaying wild animals”. It claims to address a perceived concern of “animal cruelty” and “an incentive for the capture of said animals”. We believe this is simply a step on the road by the animal rights activists to prohibit the exhibition of all animals, and that they are using the well intentioned County Council to achieve their nefarious objective.

While the Bill, as written, does exempt domestic dogs, cats, swine, cattle, sheep, goats, horses, donkeys and mules it does not go far enough. Montgomery County Maryland has one of the largest and most successful Agricultural County Fairs in the nation. It is a true gem of our county and the Montgomery County Farm Bureau aims to protect and support it. Despite our differing opinions on many topics, I know we can all agree that this treasure (Our Agricultural Fair) is worth protecting along with our Agricultural Heritage.

At the County Agricultural Fair as well as at other Livestock Shows throughout the County over the course of any year, both children and adults come together and celebrate the fruits of their labors by exhibiting, sharing and displaying many of the livestock projects which help give Montgomery County Maryland a unique place in our country. One result of this activity is that there is competition with prizes awarded to the participants. These prizes would fall under the Bill’s heading of “financial compensation”. Thus this very special and vital activity to maintaining the collective agricultural experience would be prohibited.

No other county in our nation has the diverse business, political and agricultural position that we have. No other county has the rich diversity of thriving business, thriving agriculture side by side with the political heart of our Country and some may say, our World. As citizens and

caretakers of this legacy it is our collective responsibility to protect it. While Bill 23-17 does have the exemptions listed above, they not go far enough.

The list of EXEMPTIONS would need to include Llamas, Alpacas, Ostriches, Emus, Raptors, Poultry including standards, bantams, ducks, geese, turkeys, and miscellaneous fowl (pea fowl, guineas, capons and other), Rabbits and Cavies (guinea pigs), as well as Pets which are shown by children in the pet show – there are divisions for birds, gerbils, hamsters, mice, rats, reptiles, unique pets, and hermit crabs.

Once you add ALL of the above exemptions, the Bill begins to teeter over the edge of the Absurd. A Bill with that many exemptions is simply a Bad Bill.

The Montgomery County Farm Bureau believes that if the County and specifically the Division of Animal Services, which is run by the very competent and capable Thomas J. Koenig, simply enforce the existing laws then the concerns over animal cruelty will be handled effectively without the need for additional laws.

Most Sincerely,

Michele A. Cropp

Michele A. Cropp, President
Montgomery County Farm Bureau
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