

Jada Pinkett Smith

March 6, 2012

The Honorable Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor of Baltimore

Dear Mayor Rawlings-Blake:

As a mother and proud Baltimore native, I'm writing in advance of Ringling Bros. Circus' performances at the 1st Mariner Arena to urge you to address an issue that will resonate with many Maryland families. Ringling—which was recently fined [\\$270,000 by the USDA for violations of the Animal Welfare Act](#)—will begin its stint in Baltimore on March 21. I ask that you ensure that the city's absolute ban on the use of *any* “mechanical, electrical, or manual device that is likely to cause physical injury or suffering” to induce or encourage an animal to perform is enforced, according to Baltimore City Health Code § 10-407(a). This is especially important since Ringling has been documented numerous times using bullhooks—sharp, metal-tipped weapons—to strike elephants.

Unlike me and other actors, elephants do not choose to perform. They are often violently coerced by Ringling's trainers with bullhooks, which are jabbed into the sensitive areas of their bodies. The use of bullhooks on elephants is not only cruel but also unnecessary, as evidenced by the fact that more than half of accredited zoos in the U.S. do not use them, and those accredited zoos that currently do so are being required to switch to a management system that will virtually eliminate bullhook use.

Images from Ringling's training facility that were published in [an exposé by The Washington Post](#) show frightened baby elephants as they are gouged with these sharp instruments during violent training sessions. [A PETA undercover investigation](#) also documented Ringling handlers as they struck elephants to remind them “who's boss” moments before walking on stage. In addition, a number of the elephants who are scheduled to perform in Baltimore suffer from painful arthritis yet are forced to perform night after night under the constant fear of punishment.

These endangered elephants will soon be in your jurisdiction. My friends at PETA and I join animal advocates across the state in asking for your leadership in holding Ringling accountable and requiring the circus to comply with Baltimore's absolute prohibition of the use of devices such as bullhooks. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jada Pinkett Smith', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Jada Pinkett Smith