

LATE TESTIMONY

My name is Jennifer Hansen, I've been working with animals for 29 years and I am here because of my concern about the proposed bill SB 1126. This bill proposes to revise the housing standards of elephants here in Hawaii, more specifically the two we house at the Honolulu Zoo. While I appreciate and understand the concern for the welfare of any animal in need, I implore you to think about these elephants as the individuals that they are and the repercussions of enacting such a law.

Mari and Vaigai are Asian elephants of the Indian subspecies, and were given to the children of Hawaii as gifts from the government of India, with the help of David and Sheila Watumull. Mari has spent 29 of her 35 years here and Vaigai 19 of her 25 years respectively. This zoo, this climate and their keepers are what these girls know as their home and their family.

Is the current elephant exhibit too small? Yes. But the zoo is in the final phase of building a brand new exhibit that will give Mari and Vaigai ^{1.4 acres} room to roam, relax and live out the rest of their lives. Elephants do roam large areas in the wild, but it is out of necessity as eating 200-400 pounds of food a day will quickly use up resources in any one place. But if they have access to fresh food and water daily, in a safe environment, there is no need to cover so much ground.

Proposed bill SB1126 requires 1 acre per elephant which would render the new elephant exhibit useless, as we could then only house one elephant which goes against AZA standards. This would mean both elephants would have to go.

Every day people come to the zoo to see wild animals up close, and to learn more about them. They can observe, hear, smell and sometimes even touch these amazing ambassadors and get passionate about wildlife. Many get to visit animals that they may never see in the wild. Not all of us can afford to visit Africa, Asia or India and soon, in our lifetime, many wild places and the species within will be gone. We cannot afford to lose the opportunities to teach people about the importance of conservation. They say in less than 10 years we may not

have any African elephants in the wild due to the poaching of ivory and human encroachment on the elephants' habitats.

When a person gets the chance to meet an elephant up close it does something to them. They are amazed by these wonderful beings and the personal connection that is made motivates them to make a difference. Mari and Vaigai have had thousands of visitors over the years and every human leaves with a little more....more education, more amazement and hopefully more love for elephants.

For the state of Hawaii and the island of Oahu to lose these elephants would be reprehensible. Two of their keepers have been with these girls for twenty years a piece. This is their family. They are all looking forward to moving to a new home with more space. But being intensely social animals, family is more important to them than anything else. When a poacher shoots an elephant, the herd does not run away to save themselves. They run toward the injured family member to protect it, even at their own detriment. Elephants comfort each other, rejoice when they greet each other, females act as midwives when another is giving birth and the even mourn at the death of another elephant.

Please, we need to consider all of these factors and more, before throwing a bill on the table that will greatly affect two of our most precious residents of these islands. Mahalo for your time.

LATE TESTIMONY

In response to Bill SB1126 – Relating to Animals (Elephants and square footage)
February 4, 2011

My name is Malia Davis and I have been an elephant keeper for over 19 years. I appreciate your concern for the elephants, but does size really matter? Yes, of course, but all issues must be looked at to determine the health and well being of the elephants.

Honolulu Zoo's elephant facts:

We have two wonderful female elephants at the zoo. Mari is 35 and Vaigai is 25 years old. Both elephants were gifts of the Indian government to the children of Hawaii. The elephants have educated, enlightened and awe inspired everyone who have made contact with them, from the handi-capable to the make a wish child to even the President of the United States. It would be a great loss to the community and visitors to lose such precious gifts.

Both elephants have been at this zoo for most of their lives, arriving as 5 year old calves. They are fortunate to have keepers that have been with them they're entire life. This allows the elephants to feel safe and have stability in they're lives. This has made for a very successful elephant program. The elephants look to their human counterpart as members of their herd and then in turn form a strong bond of trust. Elephants require a stable environment in order to maintain their physical and mental health. Mainland zoos have a constant turn over rate for elephant keepers. I do believe that is why there have been noted elephant behavioral problems.

Our elephants are endowed with a wide variety of care. Of course, there is a constant source of food and water available. Medical vet care is on demand. The zoo has been very open minded to holistic care, such as healing touch and animal communication and the elephants are in daily enrichment program.

I believe that based on the excellent care and the stability of the staff, the zoo is responsible for elephants that are behaviorally balanced and in excellent health.

The elephants have lived in our tropical island which is similar to their native land. If we do not meet the need of 1 acre per elephant, both elephants would have to be sent away. I mentioned that these elephants are herd animals. They are bonded, with each other and with their long term care givers. They are healthy and are happy and can not be separated . If the elephants were sent away, could you assure that they would be together? Would they end up in a cold climate and become sick? Would they be happy? I equate it to a happy, healthy well adjusted child, living with loving parents in a small apartment and taking that child and sending him to an unknown large area with many children that are angry and unhappy and clearly have behavioral problems. Would that once happy child thrive?

Please think about the whole picture and not just the size of their exhibit. Our zoo is dedicated to the elephants and is in the finishing stages of building the much needed and larger exhibit. Do not force our elephants to endure a stressful life. They live in Hawaii and they are happy and healthy. Meet them and you can see for yourself.

Dedicated to and friend of Mari and Vaigai, Honolulu Zoo's elephants,

Malia Davis

LATE TESTIMONY

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, February 08, 2011 12:11 PM
To: PGM Testimony
Cc: inspirevision@aol.com
Subject: Testimony for SB1126 on 2/8/2011 3:15:00 PM

Testimony for PGM 2/8/2011 3:15:00 PM SB1126

Conference room: 224
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Jane Shiraki
Organization: Individual
Address:
Phone:
E-mail: inspirevision@aol.com
Submitted on: 2/8/2011

Comments:

I support SB1126 and applaud Senator Espero for introducing a wise bill.

According to Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee, "Crucial to this system is an elephant's access to a vast and diverse space. Elephants are a highly intelligent, social species, motivated by food and relationships. It is our observation that a diverse vast space and compatible others have the greatest positive influence on an elephant's behavior and health. Space helps to reduce tension and relieve boredom. With room to roam elephants can maintain healthy feet and a toned body. Subordinate elephants do not feel trapped or hunted by an intimidating elephant; with room the subordinate elephant can flee. She has an opportunity to develop the self-confidence necessary to overcome her fear, and over time she can develop the skills to relate to other elephants and become a viable, integral member of the heard. Space provides the opportunity to avoid confrontation, thereby reducing stress. Reducing the pressures that can cause an elephant to become fearful and/or agitated decreases the probability of aggression toward other elephants and caregivers.

Elephants thrive in an environment where they have the freedom of choice about decisions that affect them. Choices such as who they spend time with and when, what to eat and where, and when and where they sleep are choices that each elephant should be allowed to make for themselves. When such decisions are made by the elephants, they form strong bonds with one another and their caregivers. Without the threat of being deprived or forced to do something against their will, they are cooperative and calm."

Elephants need space to be normal elephants.

Also, we must think about the location of the zoo, as what would happen in the event of a natural disaster as a tsunami? Where could these animals go on short notice?

Thank you,
Jane Shiraki
Honolulu