

## Testimony in support of House Bill 171

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I am testifying today in support of House Bill 171, Crimes Against Animals, Interference With Livestock,

Although we have over 100,000 horses in Maryland true understanding of the nature of horses and interaction with them is not part of the everyday knowledge of most people. I have spent over 40 years studying and sharing a passion for horses- much of that advocating for their well being in their interactions with humans. I have competed successfully at high levels in several types of riding and also in driving horses. I am a former President of the Potomac Valley Dressage Association, Current President of the My Lady's Manor Driving Club (the only American Driving Society affiliated club in Maryland), I am an ADS listed instructor and a Carriage Association of America Certified Driver. It is probably true to say I have spent more hours with horses than I have with people! For all that there is nothing that brings me greater joy than helping a horse and human find harmonious communication and partnership together.

Contrary to the old Wild West Movies, the best way to train horses is through a gradual building of earned trust. Asking in small increments- with much praise and reward when they get it right and patience, smaller steps or more time gaining confidence when they are hesitant. It is a very similar process to the learning of young humans and force will never produce a reliable, confident individual. Just like young humans, horses are very sensitive to energy, tone of voice and body language. They recognize changes in those in people. Trust is critical.

I support free speech but all too often we see that speech degenerate into hatred, vehement words and insults directed at the person *when the horse is in such proximity that it is difficult for them not to think it is directed at them*. That proximity is a key issue as it creates considerable stress and uncertainty for the horse. It is a huge testament to their trust, training and relationship that they stay listening to their human but is *highly unfair on the horse*. It is also unfair on their human if they are acting within established laws and ordinances with what they are doing. Using the creation of this stress and anxiety to produce a "risk of something bad happening" seems to be a technique to try and coerce jurisdictions into stopping horse/ human interactions. It is not fair on the horses to have them be placed in the middle of that. It would not be tolerated to try and amend something relative to children by bullying and intimidating a child and should not be tolerated here. This Bill would provide valuable protection to our animals from interference which may be well intended, but actually harmful to them. I sincerely hope this bill passes and thank those who introduced it.

