

To whom it may concern,

My name is Ashley Thorn and I have had the privilege of participating in equestrian sports for much of my life. I've been a horse owner for over 15 years. I currently keep my horses and live in northern Baltimore County. Amazing Grace Equestrian Center is more than just a boarding facility, it is a home to me. I've found solace at the barn more so than any other place in the world. Maryland has some of the most exciting equestrian sports in the country. The Preakness and the Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill garner national attention every year.

The history of equine activities in Maryland is robust, but despite this rich history Amazing Grace Equestrian Center has been victim of negligent neighbors who do not give the courtesy of keeping their firework activities away from our horses and other livestock. Every week leading up to New Years Eve, the 4th of July and any other random day people decide to shoot off fireworks, the barn owner and other boarders are on edge worried about the safety of their horses. Despite our work to desensitize our horses, the unpredictability and loud noise of the fireworks still spooks even the calmest horses especially when ignited in close range. Horses are prey animals, meaning that if they perceive a threat, they go into fight or flight mode. Unfortunately for most domestic horses, their instinct is to flee. Our horses have injured themselves running into fence boards in a blind panic. This not only puts our horses at risk of injury or death, but the people entrusted to care for them as well. Unfortunately for horses, one cut or injury to one of the many tendons in their legs will result in astronomical vet bills for rehabilitation, or more likely, euthanasia.

If HB1443 must be passed, I implore you to make amendments to include provisions that protect our horses and other livestock. Maryland's dependence on the equine industry for jobs and revenue is undeniable. The passage of this bill into law not only jeopardizes the livelihoods of these individuals but also poses an imminent threat to the very animals which parts of our state rely on for their prosperity and heritage. I think of my horses as part of my family, and this bill if not amended will put horses and other livestock in danger of injury or possible death. Thank you for your time.