2024 SESSION
POSITION PAPER

BILL: **HB 113 - Vehicle Laws – Horse Riding – Helmet Requirement for Minors**

COMMITTEE: **House - Environment and Transportation Committee**

POSITION: **Letter of Support**

BILL ANALYSIS: **HB 113 prohibits an adult who is directly supervising a minor from allowing the minor to ride a horse unless the minor is wearing a properly secured helmet that meets certain standards.**

POSITION RATIONALEe The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) **supports HB 113**. The bill requires an adult who is present and supervising a minor to ensure the minor wears a helmet while riding horses, except in certain circumstances.

Horseback riding carries a higher injury rate than both football and motorcycle racing. Maryland's universal helmet rule requires all motorcyclists and children riding bicycles to wear a helmet. The same standard for horseback riding would protect Maryland children and teens from serious brain or head injury.

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is an injury to the brain, caused by a sudden or violent blow to the head or body. TBIs can occur when a rider falls off a horse or is struck by the horse. TBIs can be mild, moderate, or severe and can lead to death or permanent disability. Some individuals with TBIs may need additional medical care and support with daily living activities. Wearing a helmet can reduce the risk for a head injury by 40-50% in equestrian sports[1].

According to data from the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission, from 2016 to 2021, there were 222 emergency room visits for horse-related injuries that included a TBI diagnosis among people 19 years of age and younger in Maryland.

This bill has the potential to reduce debilitating injuries and decrease Medicaid and Developmental Disabilities Administration costs. The lifetime cost of acute head injury can be up to $3 million.[2]

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this LOS for HB 113. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*

[1] *Zuckerman, S. L., Morgan, C. D., Burks, S., Forbes, J. A., Chambless, L. B., Solomon, G. S., & Sills, A. K. (2015). Functional and structural traumatic brain injury in equestrian sports: a review of the literature. World neurosurgery, 83(6), 1098-1113*
[2] *Edmonds, Chandi. "The Steep Cost of Brain Injury Recovery." Available from https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2015/12/opinion-next-avenue-brain-injury/.*