



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 113 Vehicle Laws – Horse Riding – Helmet Requirement for Minors

SUPPORT

GOOD AFTERNOON CHAIR KORMAN, VICE CHAIR BOYCE, AND ESTEEMED COLLEAGUES. FOR THE RECORD, I AM DELEGATE MARY LEHMAN ASKING FOR YOUR FAVORABLE REPORT FOR HB 113, A BILL RQUIRING HELMETS FOR EQUESTRIANS UNDER AGE 18 WHO ARE RIDING ON PUBLIC TRAILS AND OTHER PUBLIC PROPERTY OR TAKING LESSONS OR TRAINING ON PROPERTY OWNED BY COMMERCIAL BARNs.

I AM PRESENTING THE BILL THAT PASSED THE FULL HOUSE LAST YEAR **WITH TWO CHANGES**:

1. THE BILL DROPS THE EXEMPTION FOR WESTERN RIDERS; AND
2. IT CHANGES THE DEFINION OF PROPERTY TO WHICH THE BILL APPLIES, TYING IT TO THE GROUNDS OF A FACILITY THAT SOLICITS OR OFFERS TO THE PUBLIC RECREATIONAL, EDUCATIONAL, OR COMPETITIVE EQUESTRIAN ACTIVITIES. THIS MEANS PRIVATELY OR PUBLICLY OWNED BARNs/FACILITIES.

I AM ALSO PRESENTING A FRIENDLY AMENDMENT THAT ADDS “THERAPEUTIC” TO THE PUBLIC PROPERTY DEFINITION AND EXEMPTS RIDERS RECEIVING OCCUPATIONAL, PHYSICAL OR SPEECH THERAPY TREATMENT FROM LICENSED MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS, WHO ARE UNABLE TO WEAR A CERTIFIED HELMET, IN WHICH CASE AN ALTERNATIVE HELMET IS REQUIRED.

THE BILL REQUIRES THAT AN ADULT WHO IS SUPERVISING MINORS ENSURES THAT THE YOUNG RIDERS ARE WEARING A PROPERLY FITTED, SECURED HELMET THAT MEETS NATIONAL HEADGEAR SAFETY STANDARDS. SUCH HELMETS ARE WIDELY AVAILABLE AND AFFORDABLE, WITH TOP RATED HELMETS THAT COST UNDER \$70.

WHY DO I FEEL SO STRONGLY ABOUT THE NEED FOR A HELMET REQUIREMENT FOR RIDERS UNDER 18 THAT I WOULD BRING THIS BILL BACK A THIRD TIME? IT’S BECAUSE 39% OF ALL RIDING INJURIES OCCUR IN RIDERS UNDER 19, WITH THE RISK OF SEVERE INJURY HIGHER THAN SPORTS SUCH AS AMERICAN FOOTBALL. AMONG YOUNG RIDERS, 21% ARE INJURED IN A GIVEN YEAR—AND 25% OF LETHAL SPORTS INJURIES IN CHILDREN ARE CAUSED BY HORSESBACK RIDING.

WHY IS HEAD INJURY SO PREDOMINANT AMONG THE TYPES OF RIDING ACCIDENTS? HORSES WEIGH UPWARDS OF 1500 LBS, THEY CAN TRAVEL AT SPEEDS APPROACHING 40 MPH, AND A HORSE RIDER’S HEAD CAN BE 9 FT. OR MORE OFF THE GROUND.

CONCUSSION AND OTHER TYPES OF TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY PREVENTION IS RECEIVING SIGNIFICANT ATTENTION IN SPORTS OVERALL, BUT IT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO MINIMIZE IT IN CHILDREN, GIVEN ITS POTENTIAL FOR LIFE-ALTERING CONSEQUENCES FOR BOTH THE VICTIM AND THEIR FAMILY. A *JOURNAL OF DISABIITY AND REHABILITATION* STUDY OF THE LONG-TERM OUTCOME OF EQUESTRIAN INJURIES IN CHILDREN FOUND THAT 41% OF 100 RESPONDENTS WHO WERE TREATED IN A HOSPITAL OVER A 5-YEAR PERIOD WERE STILL EXPERIENCING VARIOUS DISABIILITIES 4 YEARS POST INJURY.

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THE COST OF TREATING THESE INJURIES CAN RUN AS HIGH AS \$3M PER INJURY, WHICH IS WELL BEYOND THE MEANS OF MOST. YOU WILL HEAR FROM MARYLAND PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS AND INDUSTRY EXPERTS ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE COSTS NEEDING TO BE BORN BY MARYLAND TAXPAYERS. ACCORDING TO THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY HEALTH OFFICERS (MACHO), BETWEEN 2016-2021 THERE WERE 222 EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS IN MARYLAND FOR HORSE RIDING-RELATED ACCIDENTS BY MINORS UNDER 19 THAT INCLUDED TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES.

HB 113 APPLIES TO MINORS RIDING HORSES ON ROADWAYS, PUBLIC RIDING TRAILS, AND AT FACILITIES THAT SOLICIT THE PUBLIC FOR RECREATIONAL, EDUCATIONAL, THERAPEUTIC OR COMPETITIVE EQUESTRIAN ACTIVITIES. IT ALSO APPLIES TO RIDERS OF DONKEYS, MULES, AND PONIES. IT DOES NOT APPLY TO THOSE CROSSING A PUBLIC ROAD THAT SEPARATES PRIVATE LAND, THOSE ENGAGED IN AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES, AMISH AND MENONITE RIDERS, AND THOSE RECEIVING THERAPEUTIC SERVICES FROM A MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL WHO CANNOT WEAR AN ASTM/SEI-CERTIFIED HELMET, IN WHICH CASE THE PATH GUIDELINES FOR ALTERNATIVE HELMET USE WOULD APPLY.

MARYLAND ALREADY REQUIRES CHILDREN UNDER 16 TO WEAR HELMETS WHEN RIDING BICYCLES, SCOOTERS, SKATEBOARDS, AND INLINE SKATES. BROADENING THESE REQUIREMENTS TO INCLUDE HORSE RIDING IS A LOGICAL AND LONG OVERDUE STEP TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN FROM PREVENTABLE, AND POTENTIALLY CATASTROPHIC INJURY.

THANK YOU AND I URGE A FAVORABLE REPORT.