

Testimony on HB0113/SB0042 ("Horse Riding - Helmet Requirement for Minors")

I am Barbara Sollner-Webb-Webb (17200 Melbourne Dr, Laurel MD), a life-time Maryland resident and a small farm owner who loves to enjoy Maryland's beautiful green areas by trail riding on my sweet horses. I have been a long-time active member of Trail Riders of Today ("TROT"), a 42-year-old nonprofit organized under the laws of Maryland that is dedicated to advancing equestrian trail riding, trails and open spaces and for years has supported Delegate Lehman's efforts to get a helmet bill for minors riding on public lands in Maryland. It is important legislation and seems a brilliant public health initiative.

Almost every equestrian has had, or knows someone who had, a "freak accident" where possible serious brain injury was averted or at least minimized due to the rider wearing a helmet. I personally would likely have been permanently impaired if not killed were it not for the protection from my helmet in a bad horse accident ages ago. For decades, all rides that I have organized have required that helmets be worn by everyone who participates and have generally encouraged everyone to wear a helmet whenever out riding and to urge their family and friends wear them too, especially minors. According to a recent UCONN Animal Science study, helmets can reduce the possibility of death by head injury by 70-80% (<<https://animalscience.uconn.edu/equine/helmet-safety.php>>). Indeed, a recent TROT membership survey reaffirmed that the members strongly favor requiring helmets for all riders, with well over 90% membership support for requiring helmets by minor riders.

To help protect Maryland's youths from suffering a serious brain injury when riding horses on public lands, please pass HB0113/SB0042.

Thank you for your time and attention.