



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

January 31, 2024

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: SB 42 – Vehicle Laws – Horse Riding – Helmet Requirement for Minors – Letter of Support

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is submitting this letter of support for SB 42 – Vehicle Laws – Horse Riding – Helmet Requirement for Minors. This 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.

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.

MDH operates the Youth Camp Program, which licenses and inspects youth camps across the state. Youth camps are regulated under COMAR 10.16.06, which already requires participants to wear an American Society of Testing and Materials rated helmet for equestrian events.

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.

I hope this information is useful. If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Laura Herrera Scott".

Laura Herrera Scott, MD, MPH
Secretary