

SB0042_MD Youth Advisory Council_Fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Alexander Hossainkhail

Position: FAV



Maryland Youth Advisory Council
c/o Governor's Office of Crime
Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services
100 Community Place,
Crownsville, MD 21032

Grace Minakowski, *Chair*
Will O'Donnell, *Vice-Chair*
Folashade Epebinu, *Secretary*

January 31, 2024

Re: SB 42 | Vehicle Laws - Horse Riding - Helmet Requirement for Minors

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders who serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues facing youth.

HB 113 reflects a pressing issue concerning the safety and well-being of our young equestrians in Maryland. Horseback riding is a historically and culturally rich activity that anyone is able to enjoy. From Native American culture, to therapy and sports competitions, it is understood to be a core aspect of enjoyment and rigor in many Marylander's lives. With that, there are also risks understood just as in any sport, and these risks can be mitigated through safe practices such as wearing the proper equipment like helmets. While the risk of fatality from horseback riding is relatively low, the CDC reports that a study observed 60% of fatalities from 1976-1987 being associated with head injuries.¹ Furthermore, while falls account for the majority of injuries associated with horseback riding, less than 20% of individuals had a helmet on at the time of the fall.² Based on this evidence, the CDC highly recommends helmet use, specifically with standardized safety designs, as a preventative measure of traumatic injuries, just as helmets and protective gear are recommended and required for other intensive activities such as motorcycle riding and youth-bicyclists.^{3 4}

HB 113 seeks to mandate the use of protective headgear for minors engaging in horseback riding on highways, public horse-riding paths or trails, and the grounds of facilities that offer recreational, educational, or competitive equestrian activities *to the public*. Specifically, the bill requires that any adult present and directly supervising a minor riding a horse ensures the minor wears a helmet properly secured and meeting with or exceeding the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards for equestrian riding helmets.

¹ "Current Trends Injuries Associated with Horseback Riding --United States, 1987 and 1988." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed January 24, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00001626.htm>.

² Grossman JA, Kulund DN, Miller CW, et al. Equestrian injuries: results of a prospective study. JAMA 1978;240:1881-2. Accessed January 24, 2024.

³ "Maryland Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Administration." MVA. Accessed January 24, 2024. https://mva.maryland.gov/safety/Pages/motorcycle/protective-gear.aspx#:~:text=*In%20Maryland%2C%20individuals%20may%20not,they%20do%20not%20prevent%20crashes.

⁴ "Your Bicycle Helmet - Mdot Sha." MDOT State Highway Administration. Accessed January 24, 2024. <https://roads.maryland.gov/mdotsha/pages/Index.aspx?pageid=599>.

This legislation not only emphasizes the critical importance of preventative measures in recreational activities, but also underlines the need for legislation which prioritizes the physical wellbeing of our younger population and ensures they can thrive in adulthood. The Council has voted in favor of endorsing **HB 113**, as it aligns with the Council's Legislative Platform supporting:

- a. Advocating for proactive measures which ensure the safety of youth and students (Article IV. Health And Social Issues; Clause F), and;
- b. Supporting initiatives designed to promote the physical and social well-being of Maryland Youth (Article IV. Health And Social Issues; Clause P).

HB 113 is not only a step forward in enhancing the safety of young equestrians, but also respects the diverse heritage of horseback riding within Maryland. Through this legislation, we align with best practices in safety and take a significant step towards preventing avoidable accidents and injuries. The Council believes it the duty of the Maryland General Assembly to pass legislation which will create a safe, healthy future for our generation. For these reasons, the Council supports **HB 113** and respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee. We thank you for your consideration of our position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Minakowski', written in a cursive style.

Grace Minakowski, Chair
Maryland Youth Advisory Council

helmet bill testimony 1-2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Barbara Sollner-Webb

Position: FAV

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.

2023-01-30 - SB042 - BIAMD Request for FAVORABLE S

Uploaded by: Bryan Pugh

Position: FAV



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Senator William C. Smith, Chair
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: BIAMD Writing In Support - SB042 Vehicle Laws-Horse Riding-Helmet Requirements for Minors

Dear Senator Smith, Senator Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

For the past 41 years, through its Brain injury Connection Center (1.800.221.6443), its website (www.biamd.org), and its social media presence BIAMD has sought to educate, enlighten, and support the estimated 120,000 Maryland families currently living with the devastating effects of brain injury and the caregivers and professionals who serve them. BIAMD proudly supports policies that prevent brain injuries or reduce the severity of brain injuries of Marylanders.

Symptoms and impact of a brain injury vary based on the part of the brain injured, severity of injury and the age or development of each child. A person's brain is not fully formed until they are in their early to mid-twenties meaning the full impact of a brain injury during childhood may not be fully evident until much later in life. A brain injury in childhood can have devastating lifelong consequences for both the child and their family.

Due to the size, speed and sometimes unpredictable nature of a horse, proper safety precautions should be taken to avoid significant injury. According to the American Medical Equestrian Association (AMEA), head injuries account for 60 percent of deaths due to equestrian accidents in the United States. AMEA further calculates that wearing ASTM/SEI approved helmets have reduced all riding-related head injuries by 30% and severe head injuries by 50%. In Maryland, based on data from the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMMS), 28% of minors treated for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) related falls in equestrian sports were not wearing a helmet.

While there are no "concussion proof" helmets, research shows that equestrian helmets do reduce the severity of traumatic brain injury and reduce the likelihood that a person will sustain a skull fracture. Requiring a supervising adult to ensure that these children are wearing a well-fitting ASTM/SEI approved helmet give the best chance of minimizing injuries, should the unexpected occur. No matter how experienced a rider is or how well trained a horse is, there will always be situations that can occur that are out of their control, like a stumble or loud noise. Wearing an ASTM/SEI certified helmet has been shown to reduce the devastating effects caused by brain injuries and should be made a mandatory part of young Marylander's horse-riding experience.

We ask you for a favorable report for SB 042.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "BTP", is written over a horizontal line.

Bryan Thomas Pugh
Executive Director

We Educate. We Serve. We Care.

2200 Kernan Drive ♦ Baltimore, MD 21207

Phone: 410-448-2924 ♦ 800-221-6443 ♦ www.biamd.org

SB0042_FAV_MDACEP_Veh. Laws - Horse Riding - Helme

Uploaded by: Danna Kauffman

Position: FAV



Maryland Chapter

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF
EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Members, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable Ariana B. Kelly

FROM: Danna L. Kauffman
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise

DATE: January 31, 2024

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 42 – *Vehicle Laws – Horse Riding – Helmet Requirement for Minors*

The Maryland Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians (MDACEP), which represents the interests of emergency physicians and their patients throughout the State of Maryland, **supports** Senate Bill 42.

Senate Bill 42 prohibits a minor from riding a horse unless the minor is wearing a helmet that meets or exceeds the standards of the American Society of Testing and Materials for protective headgear used in equestrian riding. The bill applies to riding a horse on (1) a highway; (2) a public horse-riding path; or (3) the grounds of a facility for which the primary purpose is recreational, educational, or competitive equestrian activities. The bill's requirements do not apply to a minor who is (1) crossing a public highway that separates privately owned land; (2) engaged in an agricultural practice or pursuit; or (3) a member of an Amish or a Mennonite community.

Riding a horse, even for skilled riders, carries an inherent risk, given the possibility of events occurring that are out of the control of the rider, such as the horse getting spooked and throwing the rider off. Wearing a helmet reduces the risk of head injuries as well as the risk of skull fracture, brain injury, and neck and spinal cord injuries. Helmets are also designed to reduce the risk of penetration by a sharp object when a fall occurs. Senate Bill 42 is a commonsense approach that only applies to minors. Maryland law already protects minors when riding a bicycle and the same policy should apply to minors when riding a horse. Therefore, MDACEP respectfully requests a favorable vote on Senate Bill 42.

For more information call:

Danna L. Kauffman
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
410-244-7000

testimony - helmet bill 2024 Senate.pages.pdf

Uploaded by: Jane Seigler

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
HORSE
COUNCIL

P.O. Box 606 | Lisbon, Maryland 21797
www.mdhorsecouncil.org

One Common Bond: The Horse
One Common Voice: The Horse Council

In the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, January 31, 2024

Testimony of the Maryland Horse Council on SB 42

Vehicle Laws – Horse Riding – Helmet Requirement for Minors - **FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Horse Council (MHC) is a membership-based trade association that represents the state-wide horse industry in Maryland. Our members include horse farms; horse related businesses; equestrian competitors; trainers; individual enthusiasts; equine-assisted therapy programs; and breed, interest, and discipline associations. Almost 500,000 Maryland households contain at least one person who owns a horse and/or participates in equestrian activities.

A recent Economic Impact Study conducted for the American Horse Council found that 16% of Maryland horse owners and 33% of Marylanders who do not own their own horses but who ride horses owned by others, are under the age of 18.

There are numerous reasons why this is a good bill. According to recent research:

- Seventy percent of all reported equestrian fall accidents resulted in a head injury, of which 91% were concussions.
- Head injuries account for 18 percent of emergency room injuries among equestrians.
- Medical Examiner reports show that 60% or more of horse-related deaths are caused by head injuries. Helmets can reduce this possibility by 70-80%.
- The American Medical Equestrian Association calculates that ASTM approved helmets have reduced all riding-related head injuries by 30% and severe head injuries by 50%.
- Head injuries are the most common reason for horse-related hospital admissions.
([https://sportsmedicine-open.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40798-019-0193-0#:~:text=Injuries%20reported%20for%20undamaged%20helmets,diffuse%20axonal%20injury%20\(DAI\)](https://sportsmedicine-open.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40798-019-0193-0#:~:text=Injuries%20reported%20for%20undamaged%20helmets,diffuse%20axonal%20injury%20(DAI);); https://vtx.vt.edu/videos/k/2021/10/1_dtsg3mj7.html;
<https://equusmagazine.com/riding/riding-helmet-facts/>)
- Many horse organizations in Maryland, including Pony Clubs and horse show/competition associations and venues already support and promote helmet safety and require that minors and adults wear ASTM approved helmets at all times while mounted. Many lesson

stables do, as well, frequently required by insurance carriers, though some report receiving “pushback” from students and even parents of students, when trying to enforce their rules. Passing a statewide law would provide legal reinforcement for the lesson stable owner’s or trainer’s own rules/requirements.

It is sometimes believed that equestrians are an elite demographic. A 2023 study by the American Horse Council revealed, however, that 45% of horse owners and 67% of non-horse owning mounted participants and unmounted enthusiasts (e.g., riding lesson students, trail riding business clients, competition riders and spectators etc.), nationally, have annual household incomes under \$100,000. 42% of owners and enthusiasts had household incomes under \$50,000. This means that, in many cases, the medical expenses and long term care of those children who suffer brain injuries may ultimately fall on the taxpayers.

We support the amendments being offered that make clear that the helmet requirement does apply to mounted occupational, physical and/or speech therapy. An exception is provided for cases when a rider is receiving therapy services from a licensed medical provider and the use of an alternative helmet is necessary or appropriate.

At least two other states, Florida and New York, already have helmet laws for minors in effect. Florida passed the law in 2009 and New York in 2013. In both states, the legislation was reportedly introduced in response to a horse-related head injury death of a minor. Let’s not let this be the case in Maryland.

We urge the Committee to give SB 42 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

THE MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL
(844) MDHORSE (844-634-6773)
info@mdhorsecouncil.org

SB 42 - JPR - MDH- LOS (1) (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Jason Caplan

Position: FAV



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". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Laura" being more prominent.

Laura Herrera Scott, MD, MPH
Secretary

1helmet.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Webster

Position: FAV

My name is Jennifer Webster. I am a lifelong Maryland horsewoman, former Master of Foxhounds with the New Market- Middletown Valley Hounds (Middletown MD), and a mother of two children who rode from age 2- 13.

Riding horses is a wonderful sport and life skill, that helps build confidence and physical fitness. Given its nature, it is also inherently dangerous. It has been customary to wear head protection when riding, for hundreds of years. As technology and medical knowledge of brain injuries have progressed over the years, helmets have become better and safer.

Other competitive sports where head injuries can happen require helmets for adults and children (lacrosse, football). Most competitive equestrian organizations in Maryland (MD Horse Shows Association, Maryland Combined Training Association are two examples) require helmets for minors. It only makes sense that children be required to wear an approved safety helmet when riding. Bike helmets are now a law for minors in Maryland. It only makes sense that the state laws are consistent for minors riding horses.

SB42 Senator Kelly Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Senator Ariana Kelly

Position: FAV



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 31st, 2024

Senate Bill 42: Vehicle Laws - Horse Riding - Helmet Requirement for Minors

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, Members of the Committee,

SB 42 is a public safety and a public health bill that establishes a requirement for minors to wear a helmet when riding a horse under certain circumstances.

You will remember this legislation from last year when the committee voted **unanimously** in favor when it came over from the House late in session.

You may also remember that the bill received some questions from Senator Jennings on the floor last year, and we ran out of time before we could address them appropriately.

Over the interim, Delegate Lehman worked with Senator Jennings to address his concerns. Delegate Lehman's team and advocates worked with Senator Jennings over the interim to make the necessary changes to better protect Maryland's youth riders while also allowing appropriate flexibility on private property.

This legislation requires minors to wear a helmet when riding horses on specific property. This includes highways, a public horse-riding path or trail, and the grounds of a facility that solicits or offers educational, recreational, or competitive equestrian activities.

There is a sponsor amendment to this bill to address therapy incorporating equine movement. The amendment ensures that children who are receiving occupational, physical and/or speech therapy incorporating equine movement as a treatment strategy, and are able to wear the standard safety helmet, are required to do so.

For children receiving therapy services from a licensed medical provider for whom the use of an alternative helmet is necessary and appropriate, a helmet in compliance with the provisions of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International's Guidelines for Alternative Helmet Use must be used.

Children with disabilities participating in adaptive (sometimes called therapeutic) horseback riding lessons are already covered by the language of the section referring to educational and recreational purposes, since that is the purpose of their riding.

This bill is critical to protecting Maryland's youth because research shows that head injuries are the most common cause of prolonged hospitalization and death due to horseback riding. In fact, 39% of all riding injuries occur in riders under 19, with the risk of severe injury higher than in

sports such as American football. As many as 21% of young riders are injured in a given year—and 25% of lethal sports injuries in children are caused by horseback riding.

Concussions and other types of traumatic brain injury prevention are receiving significant attention in sports overall, but it is especially important to minimize these injuries in children, given their potential for life-altering consequences for both the victim and their family. A *Journal of Disability 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 disabilities 4 years post-injury.

By considering and voting to advance this bill, we will be doing our legislative duty to protect young Marylanders. Thank you for your consideration. I urge a favorable report on SB42.

Support SB42 - Vehicle Laws - Horse Riding - Helme

Uploaded by: Tyler Hough

Position: FAV



Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035
410-922-3426 | www.mdfarmbureau.com

To: Senate Judicial Proceeding Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: Support of SB0042 Vehicle Laws - Horse Riding - Helmet Requirement for Minors

On behalf of our nearly 9,500 Farm Bureau families in Maryland, I submit this written testimony in support of SB0042. This bill would require minors to wear a properly secured helmet that meets or exceeds the standards of the American Society of Testing and Materials for protective headgear used in equestrian riding, when involved in equine activities on public land.

The safety of the youth involved in equestrian riding activities is a priority for the members of Maryland Farm Bureau. No matter the experience of the rider, unexpected things can happen when riding horses, donkeys, mules, or ponies. Wearing properly fitted protective headgear during equestrian riding is a safety step that should be used by minors to make sure they are protected. The members of Maryland Farm Bureau do not want to see injuries that could be prevented, or the severity of the injury lessened by wearing proper protective headgear.

Maryland Farm Bureau Ask for a Favorable Position on SB0042

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tyler Hough', with a long horizontal line above it.

Tyler Hough
Director of Government Relations

Please contact Tyler Hough at 443-878-4045 with any questions

SB42 Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Victoria Picha

Position: FAV

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

1/31/24

My name is Victoria Picha, I am an active youth participant in Maryland's horse community. I am testifying in strong support of the bill "Vehicle Laws - Horse Riding - Helmet Requirement for Minors", as I believe it is crucial to address the lack of strict enforcement regarding the use of helmets for youth equestrians in our state. I have spent my entire life around horses, having owned my own since the age of six. I am 17 now and despite more than a decade of experience, I am aware that horses, with their unpredictable nature, can pose danger in many situations. I've witnessed both adults and children around me sustain injuries in various scenarios, leaving us all in shock.

My argument is straightforward: if bicyclists under the age of 16 are required to wear helmets on public property, why shouldn't similar rules or even stricter ones apply to youth engaging in horse riding? Unlike bikes, horses have their own thoughts and actions, making them inherently more dangerous. Allow me to underscore the importance of this matter through a personal experience. Over the summer, my riding coach was involved in an accident during a competition. Her horse, Tora, suffered an aneurysm and fell on top of her. While Tora, unfortunately, did not survive, my coach miraculously walked away with no serious injuries. The effectiveness of her appropriately worn helmet undoubtedly played a vital role in avoiding the potential severity of this incident.

Please consider this: if all youth participants in Maryland's horse community were mandated to wear correctly fitted and regulation-compliant helmets, countless brain injuries

could be prevented, ensuring the safety of our future equestrians. Expert opinions in the equestrian field strongly advocate for mandatory helmet use, with recognized horse-riding organizations providing safety guidelines that show the necessity of such precautions.

I share this testimony not only for my own experiences but on behalf of numerous friends who are also youth riders in Maryland's horse community. It is ingrained in us to prioritize safety by wearing correctly fitted helmets. Passing this bill would reinforce this commitment to the well-being of our youth. I appreciate your consideration of these matters and the importance of ensuring the safety of our youth in equestrian activities. I urge you to support and pass SB 42 for the safety of our community.

Respectfully Submitted,
Victoria Picha

Neff Written Testimony SB 42.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel Neff

Position: FWA

Senator William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

January 27, 2024

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

Dear Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rachel Neff and I am the Executive Director of Promise Landing Farm, a member of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International (PATH Intl), and Chair of the Maryland Horse Council's Equine-Assisted Services committee. In my role as Chair, I work with equine professionals across the state who are helping people with physical, mental, emotional, and learning disabilities through riding and other interactions with horses. We estimate that approximately 2500 Maryland children benefit from these services each year, and many programs offering these services are at capacity and have a waiting list.¹ According to the Maryland State Department of Education, about 12% of Maryland students – more than 100,000 children -- are identified as students with disabilities.²

Horseback riding, as with many sports, carries a risk of traumatic brain injury (TBI) caused by falling from or being struck by a horse. Correct use of ASTM-SEI certified riding helmets can reduce that risk of brain injury by 40-50%. Given the lasting impacts of TBI on a person's health and wellness, and the ripple effects on their family and community, wearing a certified riding helmet is an easy way to mitigate risk.

Most of my colleagues are deeply safety-conscious and already require that their students wear helmets when riding. However, Maryland has no licensing requirements for riding instructors and unsafe programs do exist. As in any high-demand, largely unregulated industry, there is a real risk that families, particularly those who are new to horses, will be unable to recognize the safety risks and won't know to ask about helmets -- or anything else.

I was one of these children. My well-intentioned, safety-aware parents knew nothing about horses when I started taking riding lessons, which meant they didn't see the red flags at my first lesson barn, one of which was that helmets were not required or encouraged. I got lucky and a distant relative explained the importance of riding helmets to my parents fairly early on, but I could just as easily have been part of a statistic about TBI in horseback riding.

I am pleased to write today in strong support of Senate Bill 42 – Helmet Requirement for Minors -- which protects all children, including those in adaptive or therapeutic riding lessons. I also strongly support the amendment, which makes it clear that the law also covers physical, occupational, and speech therapy that takes place on horseback, while providing an exception for the very small number of children receiving these medical treatments who require alternative helmet use for medical purposes. The PATH

Intl Guidelines for Alternative Helmet Use, which are widely accepted in the industry, even among those who are not PATH Intl members, are enclosed.

I hope you will support SB 42. If you would like to discuss any of this information further, please feel free to contact me at rachel@promiselandingfarm.com or 317-809-5094.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Neff". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rachel Neff
Executive Director, Promise Landing Farm
Chair, Equine-Assisted Services Committee, Maryland Horse Council

¹Estimates based on information provided by the Maryland Horse Industry Board and the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International.

²Maryland State Department of Education, 2023, *Deep Dive: Students with Disabilities, Part 2*, <https://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2023/0228/DeepDiveStudentsWithDisabilitiesPart2.pdf>. Accessed 27 Jan. 2024.

Helmet Use

The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International mandatory standard *A30 requires all participants to wear protective headgear that is American Society for Testing and Materials – Safety Equipment Institute (ASTM-SEI) certified for equestrian use while mounted or driving. Every attempt must be made to use an ASTM-SEI certified helmet for equestrian activities. Information regarding helmets can be obtained from SEI at www.SEInet.org (headgear, equestrian helmet).

Guidelines for Alternative Helmet Use

Alternative helmets (helmets not ASTM-SEI approved for equestrian activities) may be acceptable under very specific circumstances, which may include:

- very small or very large head size
- extreme asymmetries in head shape
- significantly poor head control
- alternative riding positions for very physically dependent riders
- very significant sensory integrative dysfunction

If the use of an ASTM-SEI equestrian helmet has been tried and is not appropriate, then a Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) approved helmet for bicycle riding or an ASTM-SEI approved helmet for other sports may be considered if it provides adequate coverage over the back of the head. In extreme circumstances, when no ASTM-SEI or CPSC certified helmet is adequate, a non-ASTM-SEI or CPSC helmet may be considered. These helmets can be made of rigid or soft flexible foam and usually are found in therapeutic equipment catalogs, custom made or available for other sports. Because they are not standardized or tested for sport impact or equestrian activities, they are to be used only with extreme caution.

PATH Intl. Centers may consider alternative helmets according to the following guidelines:

- Participants who use alternative helmets (helmets not ASTM-SEI approved for equestrian activities) **MUST** have a written evaluation/justification by an appropriate licensed/credentialed health professional (PT, OT, SLP or MD) that specifically addresses the risk of equine activities to determine whether the use of this helmet is necessary **AND** to recommend which type to use.
- A non-ASTM-SEI approved helmet may be used **ONLY** when there are a leader and two sidewalkers with the participant as minimum safety requirements.
- The equine-assisted services must be confined to an enclosed and safe arena.
- The equine-assisted services must be directly supervised by an occupational or physical therapist or a speech-language pathologist.
- There are no state or local laws requiring ASTM helmet use.