



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*

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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:**

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