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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

