

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Sheila Curry, and I serve as Chair of the Maryland Horse Industry Board, and I also work in the Office of Community Impact for Prince George's County Executive Aisha Braveboy. I respectfully submit this letter in strong support of House Bill 225, which extends the statutory authority of the Maryland Horse Industry Board through July 1, 2036, in accordance with the Maryland Program Evaluation Act.

Maryland's horse industry is a significant economic driver, generating an estimated \$2.9 billion annually and supporting thousands of jobs across agriculture, tourism, and rural communities throughout the State. Importantly, this impact extends well beyond racing and includes sport and recreational competition, breeding and farm operations, veterinary and professional services, equine-assisted therapy, aftercare and animal welfare organizations, trail systems, agritourism, and major events that attract visitors from across the nation and around the world.

In addition to its economic contributions, the horse industry provides substantial public benefit. Horses help preserve open space and rural landscapes, support land conservation, and offer educational, therapeutic, and workforce opportunities for youth, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and families. These activities contribute not only to economic vitality but also to quality of life, community connection, and wellbeing across Maryland.

The Maryland Horse Industry Board serves as an established, accountable, and unifying platform for this diverse industry. The Board is responsible for stewarding dedicated industry funds, administering competitive grant programs, coordinating education and workforce development initiatives, supporting animal health and welfare, and serving as the licensing authority for Maryland's public commercial stables. Through these functions, the Board ensures transparency, oversight, and measurable public benefit while reinvesting industry-generated revenues directly back into the industry.

The Prince George's County Equestrian Center plays a significant role in Maryland's Horse Industry. In my role in the County Executive's Office, I worked hard to bring the Washington International Horse Show to our Equestrian Center in 2022. This one 5 Star World Cup Qualifying event generates a \$9 million+ Economic Impact to Prince George's County annually.

House Bill 225 is a straightforward sunset extension. Extending the Maryland Horse Industry Board supports stability, long-term planning, and sound governance for a vital sector of Maryland's economy. It also signals to industry participants and stakeholders that the State remains committed to supporting the horse industry's long-term investment, coordination, and public value—while remaining subject to future evaluation under State law.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 225. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Sheila Curry
Chair, Maryland Horse Industry Board