



January 23, 2026

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
120 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support - House Bill 228 (Slaughter of Racehorses for Commercial Purposes)

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association (MTHA), The Maryland Jockey Club (TMJC), and the Maryland Horse Breeders Association (MHBA), express our collective support for House Bill 228.

This Departmental Bill codifies protections for racehorses by prohibiting the slaughter or facilitation of slaughter of racehorses within the State for commercial purposes, including prohibitions on the sale, transfer, import, or transport of these animals where such activity is intended to lead to their commercial slaughter. The bill also establishes meaningful enforcement mechanisms, including fines that are to be distributed to the Maryland Racing Special Fund and potential suspension or revocation of applicable licenses by the State Racing Commission and the Maryland Department of Agriculture. The legislation explicitly allows for humane euthanasia by a licensed veterinarian where medically appropriate, ensuring necessary animal welfare exceptions remain in place.

Our organizations represent thousands of breeders, owners, trainers, and industry stakeholders whose livelihoods are deeply connected to the welfare and ethical treatment of Maryland's racehorses.

We support House Bill 228 because it:

1. Affirms our historical and industry-wide leadership commitment to prevent the commercial slaughter of our horses. The Maryland Jockey Club stall application for owners and trainers who stable and race in Maryland contains the following language:

Maryland Jockey Club has formally adopted a company-wide policy promoting the humane treatment of racehorses, the company announced Oct. 10, '08. Under the policy, any trainer or owner stabling at a MJC facility who directly or indirectly participates in the transport of a horse from a MJC facility to either a slaughterhouse or an auction house engaged in selling horses for slaughter will be prohibited from having stalls at any MJC facility.

The policy also applies to any actions related to the transport of a horse from a MJC facility where the ultimate intended result is a horse's slaughter.

2. Protects the reputation and integrity of Maryland's racing industry. Maryland has long been a national leader in thoroughbred racing and breeding. Preventing the commercial slaughter of our athletes reinforces our ethical standards and aligns with best practices in equine aftercare and retirement. House Bill 228 sends a clear message that the State values responsible stewardship of horses both during and after their racing careers.

3. Creates additional accountability. Giving the racing commission authority to suspend or revoke the license of an offending licensee who contributes to the transport of a horse for commercial slaughter is a power that they currently do not believe they have or can exercise, so House Bill 228 is an additional measure that can prevent this practice and create regulatory accountability.

Thank you for your consideration. We would welcome the opportunity to provide further information or answer any questions the Committee may have and respectfully urge the Committee to give House Bill 228 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

  

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President, MTHA

Bill Knauf
President, MJC

Richard F. Blue, Jr.
President, MHBA