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## MARYLAND HORSE BREEDERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

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February 25, 2020

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chairman  
Budget and Tax Committee  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: SB987 (Support)**

Dear Chairman Guzzone and members of the Committee:

As the President of the Maryland Horse Breeders Association (MHBA), a farm owner, a practicing veterinarian and a long-time breeder and owner of Maryland-bred horses I want to strongly support the Racing and Community Development Act of 2020 (SB 987). This legislation has generated enthusiastic support from the owners and operators of Maryland's horse breeding farms, as well as the general membership of the MHBA. This legislation will achieve so much good for so many Marylanders, as well as energizing the entire racing and breeding industries, and all the related agricultural businesses.

The Maryland horse industry has a significant impact on the State of Maryland with:

- More than 21,000 jobs
- Over 700,000 acres used for equine related purposes
- \$2.06 billion in economic impact for Maryland

The revitalization of the Pimlico and Laurel Park racetracks will have a direct and significant impact on Maryland's horse industry. The most valid, relevant indicator of the health of Maryland Thoroughbred breeding industry is the Annual Maryland Registered Foal Crop which, since its nadir in 2012, has been in a continuous climb to the most recent completed figures for 2018, with 672 foals produced or 3.1% of the total North American foal crop. This is a percentage last reached in 1999 [Source: 2020 Maryland Fact Book, The Jockey Club].

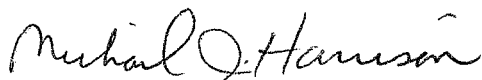
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Maryland breeding and racing faces many real challenges including stiff competition from neighboring and regional states, along with the pressing responsibilities to improve the welfare and care of our equine athletes. We applaud the plan to establish the Equine Health, Safety and Welfare Committee under the guidance of the Maryland Racing Commission (MRC). We look forward to working with MRC to produce a practical working group to formalize and validate the suggestions and steps needed to improve our equine athletes care.

We would like to conclude by thanking all of those who have worked so diligently to bring this epic opportunity for Maryland racing and breeding and for communities of Baltimore City, Anne Arundel and Prince George's County to this point. Not even a year ago, no one imagined this partnership could be possible. We would particularly like to thank the Legislators and the City and County leaders for their hard work and wisdom in the creation and support of The Racing and Community Development Act of 2020.

On behalf of the MHBA we strongly urge a **FAVORABLE** report on SB987.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Harrison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael J. Harrison, DVM  
President



February 25, 2020

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chairman  
Budget and Tax Committee  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: SB987 (Support)**

Dear Chairman Guzzone and members of the Committee:

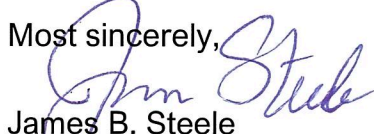
On behalf of the Maryland Million Ltd. (MML) Board of Directors I want to confirm our strong support of the Racing and Community Development Act of 2020 (HB 1056). The Maryland Million program encourages horse breeders and owners to come into Maryland to breed to our stallions generating business on Maryland farms and communities while creating commerce for the State of Maryland. We know that the stronger the racing program is in Maryland the stronger the breeding business is, and that translates into more business for the ag community.

All the horses that are produced by Maryland stallions are all eligible to run on Jim McKay Maryland Million Day at Laurel Park annually in the fall. The event is the largest, in terms of attendance and wagering, that is run at Laurel Park each year. With legislative support the event is now proudly named for the founder Jim McKay, who loved sports, horses and Maryland.

The Racing and Community Act of 2020 is a win-win for the horse industry, and for both signature Maryland racing events – Preakness and Jim McKay Maryland Million, but the more importantly the impact will be much broader than that. The planned first-class facilities in Baltimore and Laurel will become anchors for the surrounding neighborhoods and communities to build on. They will be partners in the revitalization that comes along with positive progress.

On behalf of the MML we strongly urge a **FAVORABLE** report on SB987.

Most sincerely,

  
James B. Steele  
President

valley” and fostered cooperation among groups with historically different opinions. As a result, we have carefully managed the VLT revenues into vastly improved health care for backstretch workers and horsemen, racetrack improvements, purses and breeders’ funds. This investment is dove-tailing with the timeline of the new construction in the legislation.

**Four generations of the Pons Family have been breeding, raising, racing, and managing Thoroughbred horses for more than 100 years, with nine decades being in Maryland.** We love Maryland, and enjoy living, working and raising our families here. Our Country Life Farm is the state’s oldest Thoroughbred farm, founded in 1933. Winners of the Kentucky Derby, Preakness, and Belmont, racing’s Triple Crown, have been conceived here. We also foaled Cigar, winner of 16-in-a-row, earner of nearly \$10M, and two-time Horse of the Year. Many superior racehorses, stallions and mares began their careers with us.

**Currently, we are boarding, training, and managing more than 150 horses – all of which require: farm workers, veterinarians, blacksmiths, equine dentist, feed man, hay and straw supplier, handy/repair men, van drivers, accountants, attorneys, marketing/advertising coordinator, sales people, bloodstock agents, business consultants, pedigree experts, among many others.** Horses are labor-intensive, cash intensive, and mentally intensive. Country Life’s pay top dollar for the best local hay and straw, as well as for the assistance of nearby farmers in fertilizing, reseeding and managing our pastures.

**Currently, we have 25 employees, supporting their families, who live in Maryland.** Our income has been revitalized by the increased funds into the Purse and Maryland-Bred Accounts from the VLT funding. Over the past decade, we have invested millions into farm improvements, stallions, breeding stock, racehorses, barns, buildings, fencing, equipment and payroll. Now, with the advent of new facilities at Pimlico and Laurel, we are poised for additional growth. Maryland is once again, attracting some of the top horse owners, breeders and fans. We are the envy of the Mid-Atlantic.

**The Maryland horse industry will host a job fair at Pimlico and Laurel Park for anyone who wants a job in the horse business, working with horses, from the farms and training centers to the racetrack.**

**Country Life’s business is growing. Our clients love their horses and they frequently travel to Maryland to see them and participate in our races and sales, visit the farms, enjoying the crab cakes and our live style.** They are diverse group, ranging from a few very wealthy supporters, to a much larger core of middle-class investors. Most are from the East Coast, but a significant portion are from literally from nearly every state in the continental U.S. Our clients love Maryland and visit here frequently. They plan return trips, not long after getting home.



**My grandfather, Adolphe Pone, chose Maryland in 1930's over several nearby states, because of our wonderful horse heritage, quality of life and our infra-structure of highways, railroads and airports.** At that time, Pimlico, Laurel, Havre de Grace, and Bowie provided quality near year-round racing. He found a farm with a beautiful house, ample acreage and barns, ready to move-in. He had conducted business with top local farms like Sagamore and Belair Stud, and he enjoyed considerable good fortune racing and selling horses here. Our roads and railways made his New York commute only about four hours away. Maryland was also home to many smaller horse farms, which needed quality young stallions, like the ones standing at Country Life Farm, to upgrade their mares. **Maryland has always been a wonderful place to raise a family. Hence, we too, chose to live, work and raise our families here as well.**

**For more than 400 years, Maryland has been breeding and racing horses. Kentucky was just prairie when George Washington attended horse races on the streets of Annapolis.** Maryland is home to a more than 100,000 horses, the most horses per square-mile (10.5 horses/square mile) in the nation. We offer a smorgasbord of equine events: the Maryland Hunt Cup began in 1894 is one of the oldest and most challenging steeplechase races in the world, Greenspring, ElkrIDGE-Harford, Marlborough, Potomac, Howard County hunt clubs, among others are recognized nationwide, this fall, the Maryland Five-Star at Fair Hill will attract riders and spectators from all over the globe. Fair Hill Racecourse is undergoing multi-million-dollar improvements, under the direction of the Maryland Stadium Authority, transforming the facilities into a world class facility.

**Maryland has always been a leader in the horse industry.** 1. We established the first state-bred breeders' program. 2. We pioneered winter racing here, providing a year-round circuit for our horsemen and fans. 3. We staged the first truly International race in America, with the Washington D.C. International inviting the top horses, owners, trainers and fans from all over the world. 4. Every year, we host Jim McKay's Maryland Million, the first race-day restricted to either state-sired or state-bred horses in the nation. 5. We're building new racing facilities, being primarily funded from current resources redirected to pay for the capital improvements, which has not been done before in the U.S.

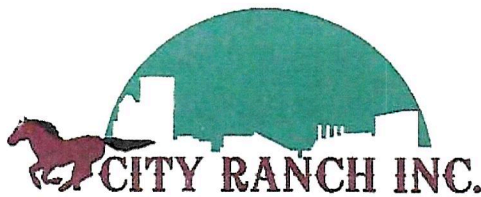
**The Preakness is Maryland's largest sporting day, by far. Our horse industry's economic impact is larger than the Ravens, Orioles or Terps. We have real-life farms, more than 705,000 acres raising horses, with an economic impact of \$2.1 Billion/annually.** The horse business is a worldwide industry. It's totality, the value of all the horses, farms, houses, barns, buildings, racetracks, trails, farm equipment, horse equipment, etc. makes the horse business the seventh largest business in the world. In addition, a recent economic impact study placed a multiplier of five on every dollar spent in the Maryland horse industry. So, if Country Life Farm spent \$4,000,000 in 2019, then our impact was \$20,000,000.

**Laurel Park, too, will undergo a complete transformation – all new barns, dormitories, grandstand and clubhouse. A new train station is being built, which should become a popular destination stop midway between Baltimore and Washington D.C. Laurel will also install a polytrack, which combined with the outstanding dirt and turf course, will be the only racetrack in America offering all three surfaces. The new improvements will be attracted new owners, trainers and breeders to Maryland, creating new business opportunities for our long-standing farms and horsemen, and will probably encourage others to buy horse farms here as well.**

**This new plan for Pimlico and the Preakness, and for Laurel Park and Maryland horsemen is an incredible opportunity, which can't be missed. Marylanders, fans of the Preakness, citizens of Park Heights and Baltimore, horsemen from all over the Mid-Atlantic and others have hoped, dreamed and wished for: a new Pimlico, as a year-round multi-use facility, helping to uplift Park Heights and northwest Baltimore, and for new racetrack facilities. Now is the time. We must work together to pass this legislation. The stars are in proper alignment, vote YES in favor of this transformative plan for: Pimlico, Baltimore, Laurel and the State of Maryland.**

Sincerely yours,

*Mike Pons, Co-Owner, with brother, Josh, of Country Life and Merryland Farms*



2601 Talbot Road, Suite 1, Baltimore, Maryland 21216 . [www.thecityranch.org](http://www.thecityranch.org) . 410 456 2195

February 24, 2020

To The Honorable Chairperson:

I write in SUPPORT OF SB 987.

I am Ahesahmahk EO Dahn, a citizen of Baltimore City from the age of nine, a 1965 graduate of Fredrick Douglass High School and a 1970 graduate of Morgan State College – University status came after I graduated. I am a US Army veteran, and a former Baltimore City Public Schools teacher. However, it is the work that I do now as the volunteer CEO of City Ranch, Inc. a Maryland chartered not-for-profit 501 c3 Equine Educational Organization that works to reintroduce the equine industry into Baltimore City that is the reason I wholeheartedly support this bill.

The bill before this body is a giant step towards that goal. By upgrading the Pimlico Racecourse and the surrounding neighborhoods the State of Maryland will show the world that it VALUES Baltimore City and its citizens.

I implore that this body include in this bill a provision to establish a year round equine presence in the plan whereby the citizens of Baltimore City will have access to the magnificent animals that horses are. I additionally request that an amendment to the bill be accepted and added to accomplish the above.

Finally, I request that City Ranch, Inc., the only licensed equine program in Baltimore City, be provided funding to operate such a program.

I pray that with your collective wisdom you will do what is right and just for the Citizens of Maryland and Baltimore City.

Respectfully,



**SB 987 Racing and Community Development Act of 2020**

**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee, February 25, 2020**

**Testimony of the Maryland Horse Council - Favorable with Amendment**

The Maryland Horse Council (MHC) is a membership-based, umbrella trade association of the entire horse industry in Maryland. Our membership includes over 40 breed, interest and discipline associations, plus horse farms and stables, horse-related businesses, and horse owners representing all facets of the Maryland equestrian community, from the owners of race horses and race tracks, to the owners of international level competition horses, local sport horses, trail horses or just beloved retired companion horses. The owner of Pimlico, Laurel and Rosecroft racetracks is a member, as are vets, tack stores, and other farms, businesses and enthusiasts throughout the state. As such, we stand for over 30,000 Marylanders.



Maryland horse people care about Maryland racing; we care about the Preakness; and we care about the communities that host our racing events. MHC supports SB 987 as an historic, innovative, and, we believe, achievable initiative that will help the Maryland racing industry as well as the local communities around Pimlico and Laurel continue to flourish and thrive.

We request, however, that the bill be amended with respect to the provisions governing the disposition of the Bowie Racetrack. Specifically, in section 11-519, (D) (1) (I), [page 9, lines 24-28] we request the following language be added to the conveyed uses:

**(I) THE PORTION OF THE BOWIE RACE COURSE TRAINING CENTER PROPERTY THAT IS WITHIN 100 FEET OF THE TOP OF THE PATUXENT RIVER BANK TO THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION TO BE USED FOR PASSIVE RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING HIKING, WILDLIFE VIEWING, PICNICKING, WALKING, AND EQUESTRIAN USES; AND . . .**

The Bowie Race Track was a home to Maryland racing from 1914 until 2015, and horses are an important part of Bowie's history. Permitting equestrian uses such as riding trails at the Bowie property presents an opportunity to preserve that equine legacy. Equestrian uses help preserve open space and provide outdoor recreational opportunities in the region. For example, our members know from our own experience that preparing trails for shared uses from the initial planning stage is beneficial from economic, development and environmental perspectives.

**MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL**  
PO BOX 606  
LISBON, MD 21765



Maryland is home to over 100,000 horses as part of a \$2.1 billion industry. Keeping part of the Bowie Race Course Training Center property in equine use is compatible not only with the Maryland Horse Council's Vision Statement ("To ensure that Maryland remains a state where horses and people involved with horses are welcome and can thrive"), but also with the interest of all people in Maryland in preserving our rich equestrian heritage, with all its concomitant economic, environmental and cultural benefits.



Respectfully submitted,

The Maryland Horse Council

[mdhorsecouncil.org](http://mdhorsecouncil.org)

(844) MDHORSE (844-634-6773)

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