

GENTLE GIANTS

Draft Horse Rescue



February 04, 2020

Dear Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

Gentle Giants Draft Horse Rescue would like to express our strong support of SB 286.

Gentle Giants is a national equine welfare charity based in Howard County, Maryland. In our collaborative work with other equine welfare groups across the nation, we frequently hear feedback that we are so fortunate to be based in Maryland, where equine and animal welfare laws are progressive, fair, and enforceable. We are fortunate to be based in a common sense state that supports agricultural industry while maintaining that animals have a right to not endure needless abuse or suffering.

SB 286 is one such common sense law. Businesses that are conducted with horses and other livestock should be free to do so without the fear of malicious attacks to purposefully harm the business owner or employees, their animals, and their livelihood. Such interference is dangerous to the animals, the business owners, and especially to the public; and it should be treated as the crime that it is.

Agricultural industries are a huge portion of Maryland's economy, and proprietors of livestock-centered business deserve the same protections from malicious intent that other businesses enjoy. Malicious interference with livestock can result in a crippling amount of liability and loss for any agricultural business owner. The livestock owner carries all of the burden of liability. If someone opens my gate and releases my cattle onto the road, resulting in a vehicle accident that kills someone, that is my liability burden; despite that it was a criminal action that caused the accident. If someone purposefully spooks a carriage horse into a crowd or into traffic, many people can be injured, maimed, or killed; and that liability rests solely on the business. Such intent to harm should be recognized for the crime that it is, and should be punishable under the law of Maryland.

I thank you for your time and careful consideration in this matter, and encourage you to support SB 286.

Respectfully,
Christine Hajek
President of Gentle Giants Draft Horse Rescue

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