

HB 0412- PURSE DEDICATION ACCOUNT - MARYLAND HORSE INDUSTRY
FUND - RETIRED RACEHORSES

POSITION: SUPPORT

DATE: FEBRUARY 12, 2020

COMMITTEE: WAYS AND MEANS

I am Kimberly Godwin Clark, the founder of Thoroughbred Placement Resources, a 501c3 non-profit in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. Before founding TPR, I worked in the Maryland racing industry for 25 years as exercise rider, trainer and race horse owner.

Since 2007, we have found homes for more than 1,000 retired racers. We are accredited by the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance and the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries.

On average, 600 to 700 thoroughbred foals are born every year in Maryland. There were 3,883 starters making 12,949 starts in 2019. Most of these horses will retire from racing before age five. The expected life span of a thoroughbred is 25 to 30 years. There are no accurate numbers on how many horses retire from racing or breeding in Maryland each year, and there is no information on where they all go when they retire. This is something that the racing industry itself is in the best position to track but the industry's "2020 Maryland Fact Book, a statistical guide to the Thoroughbred Industry in Maryland" does not contain this information. I have not been able to find the information anywhere else.

As a breed, thoroughbreds are high maintenance and cost more to care for during racing and after their race careers end. Here's what retirement and rehoming costs:

- If the horse has no injuries and we find a home in one month the cost will be about \$1,500, which includes basic veterinary/dental/blacksmith, but this is not the case for most horses coming off the track. Most need time to decompress, rest and rehabilitate from the demands of racing. This costs more and takes longer.
- Some horses have injuries that must be addressed before rehoming. Surgeries run \$2,500 to \$4,500 with recovery time of 4 to 6 months, followed by training and evaluation of the horse's best use. Any horse that has had a serious injury is difficult to rehome, even when he is healed and rideable, because you are asking the adopter to take a chance on the horse. This means it will take longer and be harder to find a home and you will receive little to no adoption fee. When I take one of these horses into my program I expect to spend \$20,000 from intake to adoption, and I usually do.
- Some horses cannot be ridden after racing. They are difficult if not impossible to rehome. They must have sanctuary. That's 20 to 25 years, at a minimum cost of \$6,000 per year, if we scrimp, for a total of \$120,000 to \$150,000 to give each horse a life after racing.

- We cannot forget the broodmares used to produce more horses for racing. They all retire from breeding, because they have not produced successful racehorses, are unable to reproduce, or are too old. These horses are extremely difficult to place; most of require sanctuary.

The Maryland Racing Industry has made great strides in creating the foundation for the retirement for her racehorses, but I believe we can all agree that this effort is in its infancy. In 2008 when I began finding homes for retired racehorses, there was no support or infrastructure for racehorse retirement here in Maryland. It wasn't until 2016 that things began to formalize with the launch of a retirement program specifically for Maryland's horses.

The Maryland racing community voluntarily provides funding for retirement of racehorses. This is commendable but what is voluntarily given can be easily taken away. Think of what it's like being an "aftercare facility" filled with horses and having no guaranteed funding to rely on. If the money's taken away, you still have to feed and care for the horses.

During a down turn in the economy, there would be exponentially more horses in need of retirement and rehoming as owners and trainers find themselves financially strapped. Wouldn't the voluntary money that is funding retirement be in jeopardy?

Since the State of Maryland has chosen to allocate funds gained by gambling at other venues to support the racing industry in Maryland, it only makes sense that a small amount should be set aside for the care and stewardship of the horses that make the entire racing and breeding industry possible.

This bill will provide a dedicated source of funding for retiring Maryland racehorses based on the growth of the sport. It will benefit owners, trainers, fans and the racing industry as a whole. It will create options for owners and trainers when their horses cannot race any longer. It will make racehorse ownership more appealing.

And it will show that we, as an industry, truly care about our horses by providing the necessary funding to give these horses the retirement they have earned. Most fans come to the track for the horses. But fewer come every year. A real commitment to the stars of our sport will go a long way toward reversing that trend.

This bill will make all the difference for the retired racehorses. They are the heart and soul of the Maryland racing industry. Without them we have nothing.