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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
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**HB 713 – VEHICLE LAWS – HORSE RIDING – HELMET REQUIREMENT  
FOR MINORS**

GOOD AFTERNOON CHAIR BARVE, VICE CHAIR STEIN AND ESTEEMED COLLEAGUES. I AM ASKING FOR YOUR FAVORABLE REPORT FOR HB 713, A BILL REQUIRING HELMETS FOR EQUESTRIANS UNDER AGE 18 RIDING ON PUBLIC TRAILS AND OTHER PUBLIC PROPERTY.

THE BILL REQUIRES AN ADULT WHO IS PRESENT AND DIRECTLY SUPERVISING A MINOR TO ENSURE THAT THE YOUTH IS WEARING A PROPERLY FITTED AND SECURED HELMET THAT MEETS NATIONAL HEADGEAR SAFETY STANDARDS. FAILURE TO MEET THIS REQUIREMENT IS PRIMA FACIE EVIDENCE OF NEGLIGENCE AND COULD RESULT IN A WRITTEN WARNING OR FINE UP TO \$100.

EQUESTRIAN INJURIES ARE PRIMARILY THE RESULT OF A FALL; AND FALLING FROM A HORSE IS NOT AN UNCOMMON OCCURRENCE. THE GOAL OF HB 713 IS TO PROTECT YOUNG EQUESTRIANS FROM GETTING A CONCUSSION OR

OTHER SERIOUS BRAIN OR HEAD INJURY BY REQUIRING THEM TO WEAR A HELMET.

THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS HAVE SEEN A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN DISCUSSIONS RELATED TO CONCUSSION SAFETY IN SPORTS. ACCORDING TO THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, A CONCUSSION IS A BRAIN INJURY CAUSED BY A BUMP OR BLOW TO THE HEAD THAT CAN CHANGE THE WAY THE BRAIN NORMALLY WORKS. THIS SUDDEN MOVEMENT CAN CAUSE THE BRAIN TO BOUNCE AROUND OR TWIST IN THE SKULL, CREATING CHEMICAL CHANGES IN THE BRAIN AND SOMETIMES STRETCHING AND DAMAGING BRAIN CELLS.

EVEN WHAT SEEMS TO BE A MILD BUMP ON THE HEAD CAN BE SERIOUS. CONCUSSIONS CAN RESULT IN SHORT-TERM MEMORY LOSS, DAMAGE TO THE VESTIBULAR AND OCULAR SYSTEMS, DIZZINESS AND MORE. WHILE THERE IS NO CONCUSSION-PROOF HELMET, AN EQUESTRIAN HELMET THAT MEETS OR EXCEEDS THE STANDARDS OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF TESTING AND MATERIALS FOR PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR USED IN EQUESTRIAN RIDING, CAN HELP PROTECT MINORS.

HB 713 ONLY APPLIES TO MINORS HORSE RIDING ON HIGHWAYS, PUBLIC RIDING PATHS OR OTHER PUBLIC PROPERTY. YOUTH PRACTICING FOR OR COMPETING IN EVENTS WHERE HELMETS ARE NOT WORN AND THOSE

ENGAGED IN AGRICULTURAL PURSUITS ARE EXCLUDED FROM THIS LEGISLATION. WHILE AN ADULT PRESENT AND DIRECTLY SUPERVISING A MINOR MAY BE CHARGED WITH A VIOLATION, THE MINOR WILL BE GIVEN EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS DESCRIBING THE LAW AND THE BENEFITS OF WEARING A HELMET. THE GOAL IS TO PREVENT SUBSEQUENT OCCURRENCES.

THE USE OF AN APPROPRIATE EQUESTRIAN HELMET SHOULD BE AS COMMON PLACE AS SEAT-BELTS. LIKE LAWS REQUIRING KIDS TO WEAR BIKE HELMETS OR SIT IN BOOSTER SEATS IN THE REAR OF A CAR TO SAFEGUARD THEM IN AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT, HB 713 WILL HELP SAFEGUARD YOUNG EQUESTRIANS FROM SERIOUS HEAD TRAUMA AS A RESULT OF A FALL. PROTECTING OUR KIDS FROM AVOIDABLE INJURIES SHOULD BE EVERYONE'S CONCERN.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION. I URGE A FAVORABLE REPORT.

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