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Delegate Kumar Barve, Chair
Delegate Dana Stein, Vice Chair
Transportation and Environment Committee
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support-HB713 Vehicle Laws-Horse Riding-Helmet Requirements for Minors

Dear Delegate Barve, Delegate Stein and Members of the Transportation and Environment Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Brain Injury Association of Maryland (BIAMD) in support of HB713. Through its Toll-Free Brain injury Connection Center (1.800.221.6443), its website (www.biamd.org), and its social media presence, for the past 39 years, BIAMD has sought to educate, enlighten, and support the estimated 120,000 Maryland families currently living with the devastating effects of brain injury and the caregivers and professionals who support them. We support policies that prevent brain injuries or reduce the severity of brain injuries of Marylanders.

Symptoms and impact of a brain injury vary based on the part of the brain injured, severity of injury and the age or development of each child. A person's brain is not fully formed until they are in their early to mid-twenties. The full impact of a brain injury during childhood may not be fully evident until the child is expected to navigate more complex social, cognitive, and academic expectations. A brain injury in childhood can have life long consequences for both child and their family.

There are no concussion proof helmets, but research shows that equestrian helmets do reduce the severity of traumatic brain injury and reduce the likelihood that a person will sustain a skull fractureⁱ. Unhelmeted riders are more likely to have skull fractures and intracranial bleeding than those who were wearing helmets when they sustained their injuriesⁱⁱ. The American Medical Equestrian Association calculates that ASTM/SEI approved helmets have reduced all riding-related head injuries by 30% and severe head injuries by 50%. Based on data from MIEMMS, 28% of minors treated for TBI related falls in equestrian sports were not wearing a helmet. Requiring a supervising adult to ensure that these children are wearing a well-fitting helmet approved by the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) give the best chance of minimizing injuries, should the unexpected occur. No matter how experienced a rider is or how well trained a horse is, there will always be situations that can occur that are out of their control, like a stumble or loud noise.

We ask you for a favorable report for HB 713.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

Sincerely,
Catherine Rinehart Mello
Brain Injury Association of Maryland
443-364-9856

ⁱ Connor TA, Clark JM, Jayamohan J, Stewart M, McGoldrick A, Williams C, Seemungal BM, Smith R, Burek R, Gilchrist MD. Do equestrian helmets prevent concussion? A retrospective analysis of head injuries and helmet damage from real-world equestrian accidents. *Sports Med Open*. 2019 May 24;5(1):19. doi: 10.1186/s40798-019-0193-0. PMID: 31127396; PMCID: PMC6534639.

ⁱⁱ Bier G, Bongers MN, Othman A, Hempel JM, Vieth V, Heindel W, Ernemann U, Burg MC. Impact of helmet use in equestrian-related traumatic brain injury: a matched-pairs analysis. *Br J Neurosurg*. 2018 Feb;32(1):37-43. doi: 10.1080/02688697.2017.1409874. Epub 2017 Dec 5. PMID: 29205071.