

Testimony of the Maryland Horse Council on
HB 713- Vehicle Laws- Horse Riding- Helmet Requirement for Minors: SUPPORT

Medical Examiner reports show that 60% or more of horse-related deaths are caused by head injuries. Helmets can reduce this possibility by 70-80%.

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%.

Non-ASTM/SEI certified helmets offer no protection whatsoever and are strictly for cosmetic purposes.

Head injuries are responsible for more than 60% of horse-related deaths.

Head injuries are the most common reason for horse-related hospital admissions.

There are more horses per square mile in the state of Maryland than in any other state in the nation, including Kentucky, California, and Texas, and 51.8% of Maryland households contain at least one horse enthusiast.

Many horse organizations in Maryland, including Pony Clubs and horse show/ competition associations and venues already support and promote helmet safety and require that minors- and adults as well- wear ASTM/SEI approved helmets at all times while mounted. Many lesson stables do, as well, though some report receiving "pushback" from students and even parents of students, when trying to enforce their rules. Passing a statewide law would provide a legal backbone for lesson stable owner or trainer's own rules/ requirements.

Two other states in the nation, Florida and New York, already have helmet laws for minors in effect. Florida passed the law in 2009 and New York in 2013. In both states, the legislature was introduced in response to a horse-related, head injury death of a minor.