

TESTIMONY of Joyce Bell, Easton (Talbot County), Maryland 21601

HB0116

RIGHT TO ENGAGE IN EQUINE ACTIVITIES

SUPPORT

I support HB0116 because it reinforces and further validates the fact that horses were an integral part of Maryland's history – and horses still are today, over two centuries later. Paintings and writings from Maryland's earliest beginnings attest to the importance horses – from plowing and transportation to racing and hunting.

In today's world, Marylanders continue to enjoy horses in some of the same ways, but in addition, now we have 4-H, High School Rodeo, competitions in various disciplines (cross country, stadium jumping, dressage, endurance, competitive trail riding, jousting, obstacle competitions, driving, and more). The horse industry is full of jobs across all sectors. The economic benefit to Maryland of these equine activities cannot be underestimated.

Horses also may be one of the best tools ever for fostering healthy, well-adjusted children. They are the perfect antidote to today's digital mania. Horses get kids off the couch and out into nature. Riding -- and grooming, pushing wheelbarrows, carrying buckets -- is terrific exercise while developing flexibility and coordination. With childhood obesity tripling from 1971 to 2011, getting kids off the couch is more important now than ever, when there are so many negative influences from mass media and pop culture. Owning or caring for horses promotes responsibility, accountability, patience, empathy, dedication, and self-discipline – all key attributes to success to people of all ages.

Importantly, this statutory acknowledgement of the importance of equestrian activities can be a big help when working on multi-use trail issues.

Please give HB0116 a favorable report.