

HOUSE BILL 713

A BILL ENTITLED: AN ACT concerning Vehicle Laws – Horse Riding – Helmet Requirement for Minors

I am the mother of a 15 year old equestrian who has been riding horses since she was seven years old. She has been thrown from a horse several times and each time avoided a concussion because she was wearing an approved helmet. Two of these falls resulted in an emergency room visit and confirmation that her helmet did its job in protecting her head. Per guidelines, her helmet was replaced each time her head hit the ground in a fall to ensure maximum protection should she fall again.

Horses get nervous when encountering something or someone unexpected. They can bolt, rear on their hind legs or both, causing the rider to be unseated. On public trails it is not uncommon to unexpectedly meet leashed and unleashed dogs, joggers and children on bicycles, along with wildlife. While many of these meetings are uneventful, each poses the risk of unpredictable behavior by one or more involved. Even an experienced rider can find themselves challenged to stay in the saddle and may land on the ground. My opinion is that minors should be required to wear protective helmets when riding on public land until they are old enough to fully understand and appreciate the related risk and benefits of protective headgear. I also believe that as adults they will choose to continue to wear a helmet.