

Testimony on HB713 ("Horse Riding - Helmet Requirement for Minors")

Dear Chairman Smith and all members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am Barbara Sollner-Webb-Webb (17200 Melbourne Dr, Laurel MD), a life-time Maryland resident and a small farm owner who loves to enjoy Maryland's beautiful green areas by trail riding on my sweet horses. I am a long-time active member of Trail Riders of Today ("TROT"), a 42-year-old Maryland nonprofit that is dedicated to advancing equestrian trail riding, trails and open spaces.

Today I am testifying for TROT's well over 200 Maryland members to convey that we strongly support HB713. It is important legislation and seems a brilliant public health initiative.

Almost every equestrian has had, or knows someone who had, a "freak accident" where possible likely brain injury was averted or at least minimized due to the rider wearing a helmet. [I personally would surely have been permanently impaired if not for the protection from my helmet in a bad horse accident many years ago.] For decades, TROT required that helmets be worn by everyone who participates in a TROT-sponsored trail ride or other mounted event. TROT has also encouraged all members to wear a helmet whenever they are out riding anywhere and to urge their family and friends wear them too -- especially minors. Indeed, a recent TROT membership survey reaffirmed that our members strongly favor requiring helmets for all riders, with well over 90% membership support for requiring helmets by minor riders. Furthermore, a recent University of Connecticut Animal Science study revealed that wearing a helmet reduces an equestrian's chance of death from head injury by 70-80% (<<https://animalscience.uconn.edu/equine/helmet-safety.php>>).

To help protect Maryland's youths from suffering a serious brain injury when riding horses on public lands, please pass HB713.

Thank you for your time and attention.