

MD HB 713

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Bio: Current Chief Executive Officer of the [United States Eventing Association \(USEA\)](#). Previously, served as an Executive Director, Senior Adviser, and Chief Operating Officer managing the programs and operations of federal, state, and non-profit boards, commissions, and committees including as the Executive Director of the Maryland Horse Industry Board within the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Research, Education and Economics Advisory Board. Has provided guidance to two Governors, three Maryland Secretaries of Agriculture, as well as the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture, and Congress. The parent of two daughters aged 11 and 15 who have been active horseback riders, riding regularly on public lands throughout the state.

Testimony: Today I write you in strong support of MD HB 713, referred to as the "Helmet Bill." Head injuries and concussions are some of the most common injuries experienced by equestrians. According to research by the University of Nevada, Reno, head injuries are associated with approximately 60% of all equestrian deaths and 18% of equestrian injuries. There is a simple solution to this issue and that is the use of modern helmets that meet established standards of protection for equestrian use. The precedent of requiring helmets is already well established in Maryland law, and HB 713 should be treated no differently in receiving the support of the Maryland legislature.

Liability is also a serious matter as it relates to land ownership and control. Maryland is a landowner of public lands and is ultimately liable for accidents which occur on its property. While the state would most likely be well protected from frivolous lawsuits related to equestrian head injuries of those not wearing helmets which occur on public lands, by passing this bill the Maryland legislature would make it extremely clear that protecting youth equestrian is a priority. This will hopefully set a precedent for all landowners in the state to follow and would show that Maryland is a leader among equestrian states when it comes to the protection of our youth.

Please step forward and support HB 713 to protect the brains of our future...it is a no brainer!