

Sadie Swift

A Moment in Time Farm

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HB 162/SB 452
Courts - Prohibited
Liability Agreements -
Recreational Facilities

23 March 2024

Dear House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to urge you to oppose HB 162/SB 452 for the sake of all equine facilities and the people who connect through them. The passing of this bill would effectively shut down facilities and services that involve equine animals. Let me explain:

Equine facilities, which include, boarding barns (places horse owners can house their horses), lesson facilities (barns that offer instruction to riders), pony rides (such as at fairs or carnivals), therapeutic activities, and more, are unique because there is an inherent risk associated with being in proximity to animals. Even though these horses are domesticated, they can still be spooked, agitated, afflicted with discomforts, etc and people are unable to determine the next move they will make. While staff do their best to provide a safe environment for all students, it is impossible to prevent situations such as a horsefly biting a horse causing the horse to buck and the rider to fall off. Similarly, a squirrel moving within or beside a horse-care area could cause the horse to move suddenly a step on his human's foot. These examples involve no negligent behavior, the concern of HB 162/SB 452, and should be included in insurance coverage. Yet, if this bill is passed, and the waivers that inform participants of these risks and provide legal protection for facilities become illegal, equine operations will be forced to shut down.

As an equestrian myself, I cannot overstate the benefits that equine facilities provide. While youth lessons may seem to be self-contained, with limited applications, the skills kids gain from riding and caring for horses are innumerable. To start, a new level of respect is gained between rider and horse, as well as rider to their coaches and peers. It is important for youth to develop an understanding for when and how to show respect to foster positive interactions and relationships. Communication and perception, which are the roots of many societal and work-place conflicts, are also taught and strengthened through participation in equine activities, where these skills are crucial to advancement and success. Furthermore, equestrians learn to have a strong work ethic and undeniable resilience because the nature of the sport requires dedication and determination from day one. The skills youth gain from participating in equine activities are broadly applicable into school and social life and immeasurably beneficial to success as future adults. Youth aren't the only ones positively impacted through equines; people of all ages can learn the previously mentioned skills, gain fitness opportunities through horse care, and

experience the mental health gains that come with partnering with a horse. All in all, the benefits of equine facilities can not be overstated, and thus, it is critically important to support their continued operation by opposing HB 162/SB 452.

I urge you, on behalf of the entire equine community, to stop this bill.

Sincerely,

Sadie Swift