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The House Judiciary Committee and The Maryland Horse Industry Board
The General Assembly's Department of Legislative Services

Requested Horse Industry Impact Evaluation for SB 452 - Courts - Prohibited Liability Agreements - Recreational Facilities

Dear Members of the General Assembly's Department of Legislative Services,

I am writing as a Maryland resident and horse owner/boarder who contributes to the Maryland equine economy, estimated to have a \$2.9B annual total economic impact, generate 28,000 jobs and \$1.1B in wages, and contribute \$1.77B to GDP.¹ The proposed SB 452 - Courts - Prohibited Liability Agreements - Recreational Facilities, however, may pose a significant threat to the viability of the equine industry operations.

After reading the bill, listening to the house testimony, and researching what I could as a citizen, the issue I raise is that **the bills impact to the equine industry in Maryland is unknown**. Anecdotal evidence was provided against the argument that insurance rates for facility owners would increase – only for 3 or 4 gyms researched, comparing Virginia and Maryland. Running a horse boarding and training facility is not as straight forward as a gym or playground, as there are no manufactures guidelines for how to maintain or work with a living animal. Accidents with horses are inevitable given their size (1000lbs+) and their high flight instincts due to the nature of herd animals. **The evidence provided in the House testimony unfortunately not provide enough data or evidence to show that Maryland horse boarding and training facilities would not be harmfully impacted**. Additionally, Maryland has a compounding legal stance for horse facility operations - it does not have an equine limits of liability law, unlike 44 other states.² This bills impact needs to be evaluated in the specific context of Maryland law.

Before voting, I request the impact to the Maryland horse industry be evaluated. Communicating and educating the horse community about the protections and responsibilities of Maryland common law would also be beneficial. Perhaps an amendment that excludes the horse industry until the impact analysis can be completed would be a middle ground all could agree to.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sarah Lightbody

1 <https://mdhorsecouncil.org/about/industry-overview/>

2 <https://www.animallaw.info/article/bucking-trend-why-maryland-does-not-need-equine-activity-statute-and-why-it-may-be-time-put>