

Dear Honorable Members of the General Assembly,

My name is Weston Hamilton and I am currently a jockey at Laurel Park. I have been riding races for over 8 years, 5 of them in Maryland. During the 3 years I spent in Oklahoma I was blessed by the ministry of the Racetrack chaplaincy established there. The Chaplain was a defining figure in my life as he presented the gospel message to me and baptized me. The life changes that have occurred since then have been significant. I have been able to walk alongside other struggling jockeys and encourage them with the hope and assurance that I now have. The mental and physical pressures of riding races are not insignificant, and it is easy to let the job define you and allow depression to creep in during the difficult times. Such struggles can turn to tragedy as seen in the suicide of my fellow jockey, Avery Wiseman in Maryland 2023.

Prayer before races is something all of the jockeys look forward to before racing. It is encouraging, helps us focus energy before the races, and it's a time for sharing the word, and time to dedicate focus and life towards God.

Chaplain is so necessary. Ron's availability is a daily reminder that someone is there, person to person every day.

Weston Hamilton