

Letter regarding the funding of the Racetrack Chaplaincy of Maryland

Hello,

I hope that this letter finds you well.

My name is William Humphrey, I am a former jockey and backstretch worker at Laurel Park. I am writing to you today to discuss the essential need and endless opportunities that would arise through additional funding provided to the Racetrack Chaplaincy of Maryland, courtesy of the proposed House Bill 337.

From a personal perspective, having arrived in Maryland from England aged 19 with simply a suitcase, ability to ride racehorses and an aspiration of succeeding as a professional jockey, the Racetrack Chaplaincy of Maryland proved to be an invaluable aid of mine. Regardless of whether I was struggling with an admin issue, a family issue, a mental health issue, or any other issue for that matter, the Laurel Park Chaplain, Ron Singh, was unfailing in his love, help and support, ensuring that I was able to thrive away from home. Not only did he and the chaplaincy introduce me to God and open up my faith, changing my life forever, but I also received invaluable day to day advice, essential resources, true friendship, and basic perspective on issues that arose in life. And then, when I decided to call time on my career as a jockey, Ron and the chaplaincy were there to support and help me in many ways, ensuring that I successfully and happily moved onto the next chapter of my life. It is without exaggeration that I say, the support that my family and I have received from the chaplaincy and Ron has been like no other and we will forever be grateful.

And I am just one of many, many people who have had their lives changed for the better because of the incredible work the chaplaincy does. Go to Laurel Park racetrack and the wider surrounding community, and you will see for yourself the tireless work that goes on: Ron and the chaplaincy are constantly providing food and clothes to those who desperately need help with essential day to day needs; they're putting on social events for those who have no family or friends nearby; people are being introduced to God and having their lives changed through the mighty power of faith; and help and support is being provided to those who are facing challenges, no matter the size. All through the good work the chaplaincy does, people are living happier, healthier, and more prosperous lives.

However, so much more can be done. With adequate funding, the opportunities for the chaplaincy and therefore the number of people whose lives would be changed for the better would increase beyond all recognition. The local community and racetrack, where many vulnerable and unprivileged people live and work, could benefit from sustainably funded health and mental health services, individual and family counseling services, drug and alcohol addiction awareness and treatment programs, nutrition and wellness programs - an essential need within the horse racing community - and also, more people like Ron could be employed to extend the chaplaincy's helping hand to a greater number of people in need. More, transportation to medical facilities and/or places like the supermarket could be afforded to people who don't have access to modes of transport that the majority of us take for granted, every single day. Just imagine how many people's lives would be positively impacted.

The chaplaincy does so much more than just spread the message of God; it changes people's lives and with proper funding, the community within and surrounding Laurel Park racetrack would flourish in an unrecognizable way. The essential need for this funding cannot be understated and the positive impact it would have would be immense.

Having seen firsthand how many people are desperately in need of help, I sincerely hope that this opportunity to gain funding for the chaplaincy through House Bill 337 comes to fruition and that the local community around the racetrack can take advantage of the limitless benefits that it would provide.

Many thanks,

Will Humphrey