

# **SB0231. Horse Slaughter Prohibition. Written Testi**

Uploaded by: Christopher Merz

Position: FAV

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**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 231**

TO: House Appropriations Committee  
FROM: Christopher Merz, Executive Director, Maryland Racing Commission  
BILL: Horse Racing - Prohibited Acts - Slaughter of Racehorses for  
Commercial Purposes

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**MDL POSITION: FAVORABLE**

This bill establishes a prohibition on the possession, sale, or transport of racing horses or racehorse breeding stock for the purpose of slaughter (“slaughter activities”), and authorizes penalties for violations. The Maryland Racing Commission (MRC), under the Maryland Department of Labor, is responsible for overseeing and upholding the integrity of all racing and parimutuel wagering activity in the state, notwithstanding the safety and welfare of all racing animals and breeding stock.

**Horse Racing Footprint in Maryland**

Maryland has a long and distinguished racing heritage, and the State continues to make significant investments in the future of the industry. According to the 2024 economic impact study conducted by the American Horse Council (AHC), the Maryland horse industry has a \$2.9 billion dollar economic impact in the state. Additionally, the racing industry provides 10,951 jobs.

There are more horses per square mile in Maryland than anywhere in the country, with nearly 10.5 horses per square mile. Further, the AHC study found that \$982 million dollars is spent on agritourism related to racing and the horse industry. The bill reinforces Maryland’s rich history, pride, and commitment to racehorses. Maryland must continue to be a leader and champion of the racehorse.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://mda.maryland.gov/horseboard/pdf/AHC\\_EIS\\_InfoGraphic2024\\_Final.pdf](https://mda.maryland.gov/horseboard/pdf/AHC_EIS_InfoGraphic2024_Final.pdf)

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## **Impact**

The passage of this bill would have positive impacts on the Maryland racing industry, its stakeholders (breeders, trainers, owners, race syndicates, and industry workers), and the Maryland equestrian community at large. The racing industry is at a pivotal tipping point with regard to its social license to operate. By strengthening safety and welfare protections for racehorses and racehorse breeding stock, the racing industry will demonstrate its commitment to the racehorse. Support comes from Maryland racing's long-standing dedication to responsible industry practices, including but not limited to: racehorse aftercare organizations (e.g. Beyond-the Wire, the Retired Racehorse Project), collaboration with the Horse Racing Integrity and Safety Authority (HISA), and support of its equine-drug testing counterpart, the Horse Racing Welfare Unit (HIWU).

**The Department respectfully requests a favorable report on HB0228.**

For questions, please contact Andrew Fulginiti at [Andrew.Fulginiti@maryland.gov](mailto:Andrew.Fulginiti@maryland.gov)

# **SB231 Humane World FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Stacey Volodin

Position: FAV



Formerly called the Humane  
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Humane Society International

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**SB 231 – FAVORABLE  
Written Testimony in Support of SB 231  
Maryland General Assembly**

**Submitted by:**

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I respectfully submit this testimony in **strong support of SB 231**, legislation that would prohibit the sending of racehorses from Maryland to slaughter. I lead the Equine Protection program at Humane World for Animals and I am a Maryland resident.

SB 231 addresses a well-documented and deeply troubling gap in protections for Thoroughbred racehorses once their racing careers end. Too many horses are discarded into the slaughter pipeline when they are no longer competitive or economically useful. Maryland should not be complicit in a system that allows animals raised for sport to be sold for human consumption.

This issue is not hypothetical. **Just recently, three Thoroughbreds who had been racing until shortly before were discovered at a kill pen in Oklahoma**, awaiting shipment to slaughter. These were identifiable, recently raced horses whose presence in the slaughter pipeline underscores a hard truth: without enforceable safeguards, racehorses remain at constant risk of being sent to slaughter, even immediately after leaving the track.

SB 231 makes clear that Maryland will not tolerate a system in which horses are treated as disposable commodities once they are no longer profitable.

Importantly, SB 231 does not end racing, nor does it place unreasonable burdens on responsible owners and trainers. Instead, it establishes a clear ethical baseline: horses who fuel the racing industry should not face a brutal end in slaughterhouses. Many viable aftercare and rehoming options already exist, and this bill will help ensure that those pathways are used rather than bypassed.

SB 231 would protect animals from a cruel and unnecessary fate while reinforcing accountability within the racing industry. It sends a clear message that Maryland recognizes a continuing duty of care to the horses whose labor sustains the sport.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to issue a **favorable report on SB 231**.

Thank you for your consideration.