
MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 231

TO: Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
FROM: Christopher Merz, Executive Director, Maryland Racing Commission
DATE: 21 January 2026
BILL: Horse Racing - Prohibited Acts - Slaughter of Racehorses for Commercial Purposes

MDL POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Summary

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.¹

¹ https://mda.maryland.gov/horseboard/pdf/AHC_EIS_InfoGraphic2024_Final.pdf
www.labor.maryland.gov

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 with the requested amendments on SB0231.

For questions, please contact Andrew Fulginiti at Andrew.Fulginiti@maryland.gov

HB 228 Proposed Amendments

AMENDMENT No. 1

**(2) SECONDARY PROHIBITION – HORSES WITH RECENT RACING HISTORY IN MARYLAND
IN ADDITION TO SUBSECTION (1), THE PROHIBITIONS ABOVE SHALL ALSO APPLY TO:**

(I) ANY HORSE INTENDED FOR RACING, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO WEANLINGS, YEARLINGS, HORSES IN TRAINING, RACEHORSES (BOTH ACTIVE AND RETIRED) OR RACEHORSE BREEDING STOCK KNOWN TO HAVE RACED AT A MARYLAND-LICENSED RACETRACK AT ANY TIME WITHIN THE SIX (6) MONTHS PRECEDING THE PROSPECTIVE SLAUGHTER, REGARDLESS OF ITS CURRENT PHYSICAL LOCATION, AND REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE RACEHORSE OR BREEDING STOCK IS CURRENTLY LOCATED WITHIN THE STATE OF MARYLAND.

(II) THE PROHIBITIONS IN THIS SUBSECTION APPLY REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE RACEHORSE LEFT MARYLAND BEFORE, DURING, OR AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF ITS MOST RECENT START AT A MARYLAND RACETRACK.

(3) EXPORT AND IMPORT FOR PROHIBITED PURPOSE

IT SHALL BE UNLAWFUL TO EXPORT FROM OR IMPORT INTO THE STATE OF MARYLAND ANY RACEHORSE, OR RACEHORSE BREEDING STOCK, OR DIRECT ANOTHER TO DO SO, IF THAT ANIMAL:

(I) IS PHYSICALLY PRESENT IN MARYLAND; OR

(II) HAS RACED IN MARYLAND WITHIN THE PREVIOUS SIX (6) MONTHS,

WHERE THE PURPOSE OF SUCH EXPORT OR IMPORT IS SLAUGHTER FOR HUMAN OR ANIMAL CONSUMPTION