

testimony - racehorse slaughter.pdf

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MARYLAND
HORSE
COUNCIL

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One Common Bond: The Horse
One Common Voice: The Horse Council

In the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee, January 21, 2026

Testimony of the Maryland Horse Council on SB 231

Horse Racing - Prohibited Acts - Slaughter of Racehorses for Commercial Purposes

SUPPORT

The Maryland Horse Council (MHC) is a membership-based trade association that represents the state-wide horse industry in Maryland. Our members include horse farms; horse related businesses; equestrian competitors; trainers; individual enthusiasts; equine-assisted therapy programs; and breed, interest, and discipline associations. We represent the interests of over 30,000 Marylanders who make their living with horses, or who just own and love them.

MHC was, we believe, the first horse council in the United States to take an official position against the slaughter of any horse. We understand this bill, as written, will apply to Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds, as well as Arabians and Quarter Horses, if they race, were bred or intended for racing, or produce racing stock.

We urge the Committee to give SB 231 a Favorable Report.

Respectfully submitted,

THE MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL
(844) MDHORSE (844-634-6773)
info@mdhorsecouncil.org

SB 231 - FAV - MTHA, TMJC, MHBA.pdf

Uploaded by: Jason Weintraub

Position: FAV



MARYLAND JOCKEY CLUB



January 21, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support – Senate Bill 231 (Slaughter of Racehorses for Commercial Purposes)

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association (MTHA), The Maryland Jockey Club (TMJC), and the Maryland Horse Breeders Association (MHBA), express our collective support for Senate Bill 231.

This Departmental Bill codifies protections for racehorses by prohibiting the slaughter or facilitation of slaughter of racehorses within the State for commercial purposes, including prohibitions on the sale, transfer, import, or transport of these animals where such activity is intended to lead to their commercial slaughter. The bill also establishes meaningful enforcement mechanisms, including fines that are to be distributed to the Maryland Racing Special Fund and potential suspension or revocation of applicable licenses by the State Racing Commission and the Maryland Department of Agriculture. The legislation explicitly allows for humane euthanasia by a licensed veterinarian where medically appropriate, ensuring necessary animal welfare exceptions remain in place.

Our organizations represent thousands of breeders, owners, trainers, and industry stakeholders whose livelihoods are deeply connected to the welfare and ethical treatment of Maryland's racehorses.

We support Senate Bill 231 because it:

1. Affirms our historical and industry-wide leadership commitment to prevent the commercial slaughter of our horses. The Maryland Jockey Club stall application for owners and trainers who stable and race in Maryland contains the following language:

Maryland Jockey Club has formally adopted a company-wide policy promoting the humane treatment of racehorses, the company announced Oct. 10, '08. Under the policy, any trainer or owner stabling at a MJC facility who directly or indirectly participates in the transport of a horse from a MJC facility to either a slaughterhouse or an auction house engaged in selling horses for slaughter will be prohibited from having stalls at any MJC facility.

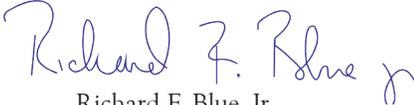
The policy also applies to any actions related to the transport of a horse from a MJC facility where the ultimate intended result is a horse's slaughter.

2. Protects the reputation and integrity of Maryland's racing industry. Maryland has long been a national leader in thoroughbred racing and breeding. Preventing the commercial slaughter of our athletes reinforces our ethical standards and aligns with best practices in equine aftercare and retirement. Senate Bill 231 sends a clear message that the State values responsible stewardship of horses both during and after their racing careers.

3. Creates additional accountability. Giving the racing commission authority to suspend or revoke the license of an offending licensee who contributes to the transport of a horse for commercial slaughter is a power that they currently do not believe they have or can exercise, so Senate bill 231 is an additional measure that can prevent this practice and create regulatory accountability.

Thank you for your consideration. We would welcome the opportunity to provide further information or answer any questions the Committee may have and respectfully urge the Committee to give Senate Bill 231 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

		
Katharine M. Voss President, MTHA	Bill Knauf President, MJC	Richard F. Blue, Jr. President, MHBA

231 Support Written Testimony_Schnell.pdf

Uploaded by: Jeanne Schnell

Position: FAV

January 17, 2026

Esteemed Members of the Senate,

I am writing to you today to urge your support for Senate Bill 231: a measure that asks a simple question: What do we owe the horses who have given us their speed, their heart, and their very bodies in service of Maryland's racing heritage?

For more than two decades, the racehorse has been my teacher. These magnificent animals drew me into "the game," and they have kept me there through triumph and heartbreak alike. But as an elder millennial watching this sport stand at a crossroads, I cannot ignore what confronts us: racing's social license to operate hangs in the balance. As Americans grow increasingly disconnected from agriculture and distanced from the origins of what appears on their tables, we face a reckoning. Senate Bill 231 offers us a chance to demonstrate that Marylanders honor our heritage—a heritage written in the hoofbeats of horses who raced to build this state's identity through one of the most recognizable and iconic sporting events—the Preakness, which stands as the second jewel of thoroughbred racing's Triple Crown.

This legislation does more than impose overdue restrictions on shipping racehorses to slaughter when they are deemed "past use." It strikes at the heart of a predatory system. What insiders grimly call the "bail pen economy." Picture this: livestock auctions have weaponized compassion itself. Racehorses appear online, often on social media, accompanied by photographs and descriptions engineered to provoke panic and heartbreak. The goal? Drive up prices by exploiting well-meaning people who cannot bear to let these animals face the slaughterhouse. It is emotional extortion masquerading as commerce, and it places crushing financial burdens on the very rescue organizations and aftercare facilities working to save these lives.

I know this reality intimately. As the former aftercare liaison for Santa Anita Park, one of the nation's premier Thoroughbred racetracks, I lived inside this nightmare. My responsibilities were clear: identify horses who had raced at Santa Anita and had surfaced at auction or in kill pens, then arrange funding, transportation, care and placement before time ran out. And time always ran out too quickly.

Saving a life is never easy when that life has been assigned a dollar value based on "carcass weight," an abhorrent term given to the value a horse will bring upon its slaughter. Windows of opportunity measured in hours, not days. Prices inflated far beyond any reasonable market value. I made desperate calls to former owners, trainers, and breeders—anyone with a connection to these horses, anyone who might help. More often than not, there was no help coming. What saved these horses was a dedicated network of aftercare professionals and individuals who simply could not look away, who scraped together resources they could barely afford, who stayed up through the night coordinating rescue missions to spare horses from a fate too grisly to describe in polite company.

But here is what haunts me: for every horse we saved, how many did we miss? How many horses who once thundered down Maryland tracks, who carried our hopes and our wagers, who

generated revenue for this state. How many ended their days in terror and agony because we failed to protect them?

Senate Bill 231 is more than policy. It is a statement of values. It declares that Maryland and its racing industry accept our role as stewards—not just users—of these animals. It acknowledges that our responsibilities do not end when a horse crosses the finish line for the final time, or when age or injury renders them unprofitable. It recognizes that the social compact between humans and horses demands more of us than indifference to their suffering.

The opponents of this bill may argue about economic impact or personal property rights. But I would ask them: At what cost to our collective conscience? What price can we place on our integrity as a Commonwealth?

This legislation will not solve every problem facing retired racehorses. But it will close one particularly cruel chapter. It will remove one avenue of exploitation. It will send an unmistakable message that in Maryland, horses who have served us will not be discarded like broken machinery.

I urge you to pass Senate Bill 231. Let us prove that our heritage means something beyond nostalgia and tourism dollars. Let us demonstrate that the horses who wrote Maryland's story deserve better than a slaughterhouse ending.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanne Schnell".

Jeanne Schnell

Supporter of the racing industry

631-312-6048

SB0231. Horse Slaughter Prohibition. Written Testi

Uploaded by: Andrew Fulginiti

Position: FWA

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