



# Animal Welfare Institute

900 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20003

September 9, 2020

Congressman Frank Pallone, Chair  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Greg Walden, Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2322 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Honorable Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden,

The Animal Welfare Institute wishes to express its strong support for H.R. 1754, the Horseracing Integrity Act – introduced by Congressman Paul Tonko (D-NY) and Congressman Andy Barr (R-KY) – both in its original form and the new language being offered in the Amendment in the Nature of Substitute, which will mirror the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act. Thank you for marking up this legislation so that it can be moved expeditiously to the floor for a vote before the full House of Representatives.

Founded in 1951, the Animal Welfare Institute is one of the nation's oldest animal protection groups. AWI is a member of the Coalition for Horseracing Integrity, which seeks to advance commonsense reforms to improve the well-being and safety of the equine and human athletes involved in horseracing. The impressive 257 cosponsors that H.R. 1754 has amassed speaks to the overwhelming support among lawmakers to address the serious problems that currently plague the horseracing industry in the United States.

This legislation would create an independent anti-doping authority that would set uniform national standards, testing procedures, and penalties for Thoroughbred racing, replacing the inconsistent regulatory schemes that currently exist among 38 jurisdictions. The U.S. Anti-Doping Agency – widely recognized as the premier anti-doping agency – would handle enforcement, laboratory testing, and violations. Importantly, the bill would prohibit race-day medications, aligning US standards with those abroad. Finally, the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act also specifically addresses the need to improve racetrack safety by creating an accreditation program to ensure that tracks comply with maintenance procedures, as well as a national database to track injuries and fatalities.

Hundreds of horses suffer catastrophic breakdowns on racetracks each year in the United States (nearly 10 per week in recent years according to The Jockey Club's equine injury database – a

number that excludes fatalities that occur during training). But it was arguably the recent spate of horse deaths at the famous Santa Anita racetrack outside of Los Angeles – 23 in the span of three months – that put a spotlight on serious animal welfare concerns with horseracing. Moreover, the federal indictments of 27 trainers and veterinarians in March 2020 – “all involved in the cruel and systematic doping of racehorses” – once again underscored the dangerous culture of drug use that permeates professional horseracing. As one of the leading trainers at Penn National Race Course testified in federal court, “almost everybody” dopes their horses in order to win – “95% to 98%.”

Unfortunately, an overreliance on performance-enhancing drugs contributes to a staggering death toll that far exceeds that of other racing jurisdictions around the world. Simply put, administering a cocktail of drugs prior to a race can hide injuries, pain, inflammation, and other warning signs that precede breakdowns. As the *Washington Post* wrote in response to the federal indictments, “no other accepted sport tolerates the cruelties that routinely result in the injury and death of these magnificent animals.”

The Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act enjoys broad support among animal protection groups and a wide range of stakeholders within the horseracing industry, including all three Triple Crown racetracks, The Jockey Club, and Breeders’ Cup Ltd. At last, it seems that meaningful and comprehensive reforms are on the horizon for US horseracing.

The Animal Welfare Institute greatly appreciates your Committee’s attention to this issue and resolve to advance legislation that will directly improve the welfare of racehorses in the United States. Thank you for your work on this important legislation during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JG', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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