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January 28, 2020

RE: Veterinary Support for H.R. 961/S. 2006, the Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden,

We are writing on behalf of the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (HSVMA), to express our support for H.R. 961/S. 2006, the Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act. This bill would prevent the re-introduction of horse slaughter operations in the U.S., end the current export of American horses for slaughter abroad, and protect the public from consuming potentially toxic horse meat. HSVMA is an association of approximately 9,000 veterinary professionals nationwide, with a focus on the health and welfare of all animals, including horses.

Each year, more than 100,000 American horses—working, racing and even children’s ponies—are brutally slaughtered so their meat can be sent overseas to Asia and Europe for human consumption. Horses are transported long distances without food, water or rest and are often seriously injured or killed in transit. Once they arrive at the slaughter plant, their suffering only intensifies.

As skittish animals, horses often panic in the kill box, making them difficult to stun accurately—and are sometimes conscious while they are suspended by a back leg, bled out, and dismembered. When horse slaughter plants previously operated on U.S. soil, the U.S. Department of Agriculture documented horrific injuries and cruelty.

Beyond being inherently cruel, the horse slaughter industry also poses serious food safety concerns to humans. Horses are raised for use in show, sport, work and recreation in the U.S. and are regularly administered drugs and other substances that are known to be dangerous to humans or expressly prohibited by current federal regulations for use in animals intended for human consumption. Horses are gathered from random sources, and there is no system in the U.S. to track the medications and veterinary treatments given to horses to ensure that their meat is safe for human consumption.

Furthermore, it makes no sense to spend millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars to oversee new horse slaughter plants when 80% of American voters oppose the slaughter of horses for human consumption.

This legislation is supported by the nation’s leading animal welfare organizations, as well as many veterinarians and equine groups across the country. We join them—and the American public—in supporting the SAFE Act to end horse slaughter once and for all.

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We urge your humane leadership in supporting this important animal protection and consumer safety legislation.

Sincerely,

Barbara Hodges, DVM, MBA
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