



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies

Water, Hay, Oats Alliance (WHOA) – Nancy McLean, Member

January 15, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

The Honorable Janice Schakowsky
Chairman
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection
& Commerce
Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection
& Commerce
Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2322-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member Walden, Chairwoman Schakowsky and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

Greetings. I am writing to you in support of The Horseracing Integrity Act - HR1754/S1820.

According to the American Horse Council's 2017 annual report, the sport of horse racing contributes an added value (direct and indirect) to the U.S. economy of \$37 billion. Yet, we do not have a single governing body to establish uniformity and accountability. Instead we have 38 different racing "boards" establishing rules and regulations for that particular state. It is evident from the 30 fatalities that occurred in 6 months, at Santa Anita, that Horseracing needs strong, consistent leadership and management especially during a crisis. Racing is under the proverbial public microscope and change is needed, in multiple areas, to be able to move forward.

In comparison, there is not any other major sport that does not have their own governing commission that creates and enforces rules and regulations, provides leadership, management and accountability to/for their participants, partners and fans (NCAA, NFL, NHL, MLB, NASCAR).

The British Horseracing Authority (BHA) is currently a good example of a single commission formed for horseracing oversight. I recently spent time in Scotland/UK and was disheartened at the lack of respect American racing currently receives. We use to be looked at as world leaders in this sport, but now we are looked at as a generation of horsemen (and women) who lack the skills and talents to train successfully without performance enhancing drugs and race day medications (Bugsch 2019). However, to be able to compete, and regain respect, on the world stage we first need to create a level playing field in our own country. I believe HR1754 is the first step toward accomplishing this objective by creating a uniform self-regulating organization that can effectively lead with authority and consistency. This agency will be able to create and implement an anti doping program for the entire U.S. Horseracing industry, thereby, putting the welfare and safety of the horses and jockeys as the #1 priority.

Personal Experience

During the past 23 years I've been an Illinois Racing Board (IRB) licensed Thoroughbred groom/hotwalker, exercise rider and assistant trainer. In recent years my husband and I have enjoyed owning a few Thoroughbreds privately, in partnerships and syndicates. With the economic downturn of Illinois racing I decided to leave the racetrack work environment and follow academic pursuits in equine research. I recently received my MSc in Equine Science from the University of Edinburgh's Royal (Dick) Veterinary School and am currently serving as a Peer Tutor in the Veterinary Schools' Equine Science Program. It is through my experiences in the UK that I began to see that there is a better way to manage our U.S. sport of horseracing. Some of my best times have been spent on the backside of a racetrack with the horses, workers, owners and fans. There's nothing better than the daily routine of getting horses ready to race and compete. I can't tell you the number of hours I have spent analyzing pedigrees and studying historical pre-civil war breeding lines. We have a beautiful sport, but we have limited our ability to compete internationally because of our dependence on medications. A recent research work, set to be published this year, "has provided the clearest evidence yet of a significantly increased risk of injury when horses are competing in races in which the trainer is permitted to declare the recent use of phenylbutazone" (bute) (see Bloodhorse of Nov. 16, 2019, p.12). In that study, horses racing on bute were **45% more likely to end a race with a musculoskeletal injury and 59% more likely to be fatally injured than horses not racing on bute** (Zambruno 2017).

Another troubling statistic is the rates of equine fatalities during racing in the U.S. are higher than Great Britain and Japan...and are much higher than Hong Kong. Although Hong Kong does not include detailed total numbers as the U.S., UK and Japan statistics exhibit. The bottom-line is that the U.S. has an 85% higher equine fatality rate, during racing, than the UK and a 49% higher equine death rate than Japan. The U.S. numbers are derived from the Jockey Club's Equine Injury Database (EID), the UK numbers are from the BHA, and the Japan Racing Association provides Japan's numbers. We, as the U.S., can do so much better for our horses, jockeys, owners and fans. It's heartbreaking for all involved to experience an equine catastrophic injury.

There are a variety of reasons why breakdowns occur. Currently with voluntarily shared data (from participating racetracks) we are able to come up with 35% of the "contributor's to risk" factors (Parkin 2019). Because the sharing of data isn't a priority and sometimes is frowned upon among U.S. trainers, we, as researchers, cannot come up with the remaining 65% of the

equation. For our sport to continue to improve we must be able to source new data inputs and HR1754 may lead us to that new era in racing where transparency fosters public favor and industry growth.

Sincerely,

Nancy L. McLean

University of Edinburgh, (MSc) Equine Science

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