



EQUINE HEALTH AND WELFARE ALLIANCE, INC.

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January 24, 2020

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky  
Chairwoman  
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Ranking Member  
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
2322 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Schakowsky and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

I am writing to express the opposition of myself and my organization, the Equine Health and Welfare Alliance to HR 1754, which imposes federal oversight of medication regulations in horse racing. Horse racing is conducted under the most stringent medication rules of any sport in any species. The addition of a layer of Federal bureaucracy to address a problem that does not exist simply taxes an industry without a rational basis. The recent upsurge in support for this bill has resulted from a tragic chain of events where horses perished at Santa Anita Racetrack. This bill does nothing to stop this tragic chain of events, but may actually place more horses in harms way. A thorough investigation of the catastrophic injuries at Santa Anita Park was conducted by the Los Angeles District Attorney and revealed NO contribution of illegal medications, and NO contribution of therapeutic medications.

Catastrophic injuries are multi-factorial. This bill does nothing to address or determine the root cause of the injuries. Rather than directing focus or funding towards research that may result in real answers, this Bill charges the Industry with a blank check to a Horse Racing Authority whose scope is limited to the oversight of medication. This Authority will consist predominantly of the United States Anti-doping Authority (USADA), an organization with no expertise in the special needs of equine athletes. At a time when the Industry needs to invest its resources into valid research investigating all contributing factors to this problem, HR 1754 charges an unknown and undetermined amount to the Industry.

As a veterinarian with dozens of years of experience as a racetrack practitioner, and as the President of the Equine Health and Welfare Alliance, I have the utmost concern about the health and safety of race horses. The proposed “Horseracing Integrity Act” fails to improve the integrity and safety of horse racing, and instead, takes the oversight of the health and welfare of the horse out of the hands of those most qualified to care for the horses, the veterinarians

In particular, my organization has concerns about the provision of HR 1754 requiring the abolition of the regulated use of the bleeding preventative medication, furosemide, also known as Lasix. Special interest groups, such as the Jockey Club and the Humane Society of the United States, have done much to conflate the issues of the tragedy of severe musculoskeletal injuries with furosemide. The facts argue against this artificial pairing. The use of furosemide mitigates exercise induced pulmonary hemorrhage (EIPH), an effect that actually decreases injury to the athlete, and therefore decreasing the risk of injury to their human partners.

We have an important moral obligation to be proper stewards of the horse, a partner with humans over the long history of our nation. Equine sports are the remnant of this longstanding partnership: we must make every effort to prevent injury where possible, and ease suffering where necessary. Furosemide is an easy decision. Any argument about how racing is conducted in other countries is nonsensical. The United States hosts more races than any other racing jurisdiction and any discussion of how our country must capitulate to the customs of other nations is simply the tail wagging the dog. The United States does not bow to the decisions of other countries in any other matter, and should not do so in the case of horse racing.

The important factor is that the equine athlete is cared for based on its own needs and what science and medicine determines. Science and medicine have spoken on the issue of furosemide in horse racing. Furosemide is safe, effective and highly regulated in every racing jurisdiction in the United States.

Most respectfully,

*F. D. Marcum*

F D Marcum, DVM

President, Equine Health and Welfare Alliance, Inc.