



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

May 26, 2022

Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Support for the SAFE Act (H.R. 3355) and the PAST Act (H.R. 5441)

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

On behalf of the American Wild Horse Campaign (AWHC), we are writing to express support for the Save America's Forgotten Equines (SAFE) Act, H.R. 3355, and the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act, H.R. 5441. AWHC is the nation's largest organization for the protection of wild horses and burros and is dedicated to preserving American wild horses and burros in viable, free-roaming herds for generations to come. AWHC also advocates for the protection of all equines from cruelty.

Public opinion stands firmly against the slaughter of American horses. Yet, tens of thousands of horses, donkeys, and burros are sent across the border each year to be slaughtered for human consumption. Slaughter is nothing but cruelty and suffering for the equines that fall victim to this industry, from the long grueling transport without food or water, to the slaughter process itself where these frightened, skittish animals can suffer multiple blows to be rendered unconscious. It's a horrific end and a deep betrayal to these animals that have served us throughout history and stand as a symbol of freedom and our country's history.

Even wild horses and burros fall victim to slaughter, and this has been exacerbated by the Bureau of Land Management's Adoption Incentive Program that was created in 2019 as a way of moving wild horses and burros out of holding facilities to create additional space for the thousands that are being removed from the range. The hallmark of this program is a \$1,000 cash incentive payment given to private individuals to adopt an unhandled, untrained wild horse or

burro. An investigation launched by the American Wild Horse Campaign (AWHC), and confirmed by the *New York Times*, shows that the AIP is routinely being abused by adopters: after receiving title to their animals, many adopters are pocketing the cash incentives and promptly sending their wild horses and burros to livestock auctions (i.e., kill pens), placing hundreds in direct threat of slaughter in contravention of legislative prohibitions on BLM sending wild horses and burros to slaughter.

In the past 15 months alone, AWHC has observed hundreds of BLM-branded wild horses and burros in kill pens and auctions—nearly half have been identified as horses and burros adopted via the agency’s Adoption Incentive Program, with hundreds more still waiting confirmation pending receipt of additional FOIA records. The number of wild horses and burros that we’ve identified in kill pens represents the tip of the iceberg, as it only includes information from kill pens that advertise horses or burros. Many directly ship animals across the border to slaughter without advertising them, and with its current resources and staff, AWHC has been limited to tracking auctions that advertise on social media or post-auction footage on YouTube; however, there are numerous auctions across the country that are live auctions and have no social media or YouTube presence.

Additionally, the PAST Act is needed to put an end to soring, a cruel practice used to intentionally inflict severe pain to a horse’s legs to force the horse to display an exaggerated high-stepping gait. Tennessee Walking Horse, Racking Horse, and Spotted Saddle Horse breeds are most often subjected to this torture—just to win a ribbon at a horse show competition. While the Horse Protection Act of 1970 intended to end soring, the industry is self-policed, there are inadequate penalties to deter soring, and current law does not ban the devices used alongside soring (such as chains, weighted shoes, and pads). The PAST Act is needed to fill these gaps to better protect horses from abuse.

It is far due time to pass the SAFE Act and PAST Act to protect our nation’s equines from unnecessary cruelty. We thank you for holding a hearing and ask that you swiftly pass both bills.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Holly Gann Bice". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Holly Gann Bice
Director of Government Relations
American Wild Horse Campaign