



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

March 22, 2023

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: HB 20 (3rd) – Vehicle Laws – Horse Riding – Helmet Requirement for Minors – Letter of Support as Amended

Dear Chair Smith Jr. and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is submitting this letter of support as amended for House Bill (HB) 20 – Vehicle Laws – Horse Riding – Helmet Requirement for Minors. This bill will require minors to wear a helmet when riding horses, except in certain circumstances. Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is an injury to the brain, caused by a sudden or violent blow to the head or body. TBIs can be mild, moderate, or severe and can lead to death or permanent disability. Some individuals with TBIs may need additional medical care and support with daily living activities. TBIs can occur when a rider falls off a horse or is struck by the horse. Wearing a helmet can reduce the risk for head injury by 40-50% in equestrian sports.¹

According to data from the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission, from 2016-2020, there were 456 horse-related injuries with a TBI diagnosis seen in emergency departments in Maryland hospitals. Of these, 179 (39%) occurred to individuals aged 19 and younger.

MDH operates the Youth Camp Program, which licenses and inspects youth camps across the state. Youth camps are regulated under COMAR 10.16.06, which already requires participants to wear an American Society of Testing and Materials rated helmet for equestrian events.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Megan Peters, Acting Director of Governmental Affairs at megan.peters@maryland.gov or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary

¹ Zuckerman, S. L., Morgan, C. D., Burks, S., Forbes, J. A., Chambless, L. B., Solomon, G. S., & Sills, A. K. (2015). Functional and structural traumatic brain injury in equestrian sports: a review of the literature. *World neurosurgery*, 83(6), 1098-1113.