



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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Committee on Children
Public Testimony
Tuesday, February 24, 2015

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL 6799, AN ACT REQUIRING SAFETY TRAINING FOR EQUESTRIAN RIDING ESTABLISHMENTS' OPERATORS AND INSTRUCTORS.

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, Senator Martin, Representative Kokoruda, and members of the Committee on Children,

I submit this testimony in **opposition** to H.B.6799 AN ACT REQUIRING SAFETY TRAINING FOR EQUESTRIAN RIDING ESTABLISHMENTS' OPERATORS AND INSTRUCTORS.

Equestrian businesses are one of the few economic bright spots in Connecticut. According to a recent University of Connecticut study, there are approximately 550 horse-related businesses in Connecticut, employing 1,137 full-time equivalent employees and producing \$38,962,000 in annual income. Enacting HB 6799 into law would have a severe negative affect on the ability of Connecticut's horse businesses to maintain their workforce and to hire qualified employees. Connecticut would again lose businesses and jobs to neighboring states.

On first blush, it may sound good to have medically-trained personnel on hand whenever a student is given a horse riding lesson. But under the mandates of HB 6977, no newly hired instructor would be allowed to work until certified in three different emergency medical courses of study, each of which would have to be scheduled with outside organizations and would take many hours away from the workplace. This could take weeks or even months to complete, during which time the employee would be unable to work. Given the nature of the horse business in Connecticut, only the very few largest and most well-financed facilities would realistically be able to comply. The mandates in HB 6977 would prevent the majority of the state's horse farms from hiring and retaining employees as needed to conduct their businesses.

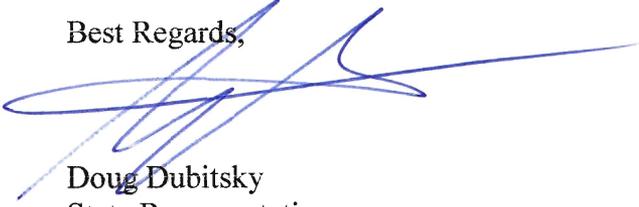
Many of the nation's top equestrian instructors travel to Connecticut to present at clinics and exhibitions at which students – often highly experienced adult competition riders – take classes on specific aspects of horse care, maintenance and riding. HB 6799 would strongly discourage, if not outright prohibit, top national talent from presenting in Connecticut because it would bar them from instructing here without first taking many hours of Connecticut-approved medical training required nowhere else in the country.

Further, the term “equestrian riding establishment” is defined so broadly as to include the private homes of many individuals who keep horses for their own personal enjoyment. For example, if a backyard horse owner instructed a friend or neighbor on how to feed or groom a horse in exchange for some hay or barn chores, the backyard would be considered an “equestrian riding establishment” under HB 6799. Because the definition also includes the care and maintenance of equines, the backyard would be considered an “equestrian riding establishment” even if no actual horse riding ever takes place. In fact, the definition is so broad that a school classroom would be considered an “equestrian riding establishment” if “instruction on the care, maintenance or riding of an equine is provided to individuals for profit,” even if no live horses are involved at all.

The question must also be asked: How will these new mandates be enforced? Prior to giving a “care, maintenance or riding” lesson, must every barn owner and instructor obtain a certificate from the state attesting that they have satisfied the mandates in HB 6799? Is that not a mandatory state licensing scheme? Currently, no state license is required in Connecticut to give riding lessons, to operate a horse barn, and certainly not to share the love of horses with friends and neighbors on one's own property. HB 6799 would, at minimum, lay the foundation for state-mandated licensure of all riding instructors, barn owners and even many individual horse owners, if not outright require it.

I urge you to oppose H.B.6799.

Best Regards,



Doug Dubitsky
State Representative
47th District

Canterbury, Chaplin, Franklin, Hampton, Lebanon, Lisbon, Norwich, Scotland and Sprague