



Connecticut Farm Bureau Association
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February 24, 2015

Testimony in opposition to:

House Bill No. 6799 AN ACT REQUIRING SAFETY TRAINING FOR EQUESTRIAN RIDING ESTABLISHMENTS' OPERATORS AND INSTRUCTORS.

Submitted by: Henry N. Talmage, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association *the following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, a statewide nonprofit membership organization of 5,000 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.*

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

Although The Connecticut Farm Bureau is interested in promoting safety for everyone involved in the equine industry we are concerned that HB 6799 utilizes a broad brush approach that will unnecessarily add significant cost and burden to equine operators and the CT Department of Agriculture.

Currently there are over 50,000 horses in Connecticut which represents the 3rd highest density of horses in the nation and the highest number of horses of any New England state. To put this in perspective we have more than double number of horses than milking cows in Connecticut. Many CT horse farms are mixed use facilities that include breeding, boarding, training and riding instruction. The provisions for training and record keeping outlined in the HB 6799 will add significant costs to operators.

The private insurance industry has been very active in recent years by helping equine operators develop risk management strategies that help them improve safety and limit their liability that are designed specifically to the type of operations that they conduct. In addition there is voluntary training available from educators and associations that addresses safety.

HB 6799 seems to single out equine operations that operate for profit by requiring them to complete the required training programs. There are a significant number of not-for-profit riding establishments in CT and we are concerned that those that operate for profit will be unfairly burdened by this legislation.

Because CT is a small state we are concerned about the impacts this bill would have with relation to competition from our border states. For many residents in CT it is an easy trip to New York, Massachusetts or Rhode Island. We would hate to see CT residents look to those states for riding instruction because the regulatory environment here in CT discourages riding instruction.

Finally HB 6799 adds additional duties to CT Department of Agriculture at a time when proposed budget cuts through diversion of the Community Investment Act funding will make it very difficult to meet the department's current obligations. Without additional funding to the Department to carry out the provisions outlined in the Bill we are concerned that other important programs will suffer.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau therefore opposes HB 6799.

Connecticut Farm Bureau Association - *The Voice of Connecticut Agriculture*