

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and distinguished members of the veterans and legal affairs committee, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Aaron Hall, I am an owner, driver, trainer, and treasurer of the Maine Harness Horseman Association. A lifelong resident of Gardiner, which is where my family has a 50-acre farm. We house 17 standardbreds, 15 of which are currently racing. Last fall, just a few miles away from the family farm, my wife and I built a house and welcomed a baby boy into the family.

LD1838 is particularly close to home for my family. The partnership of tribes and harness racing could simply explain my family tree. My father's side of the family has been racing since 1980. My father began training horses fresh out of high school at Windsor fairgrounds. Both of his parents were tellers at the fairs, my grandmother worked for the late Gary Sagris for 10+ years at Winners OTB in Cook's corner.

On my mother's side, she, along with her 5 siblings, are Penobscot tribal members. In fact, my grandfather is currently the oldest Penobscot tribal member at 93 years old and lives at the Noli house on the reservation.

The passage of LD1838 would secure a long and prosperous future for the Maine Harness racing industry, provide much needed revenue to the Wabanaki nations, the fairs, the OTBs, and many other facets of agriculture in Maine. Really bringing everything full circle for myself and my family.

Along with training what is considered a medium sized stable, I also do a lot of driving. Over the last 3 seasons in Maine I've driven in 2709 races, winning 421 of them. Three successful seasons, yet none of them ended in driving titles... this is due to the incredibly deep and talented driving colony we have in Maine, having to look no further than the gentleman sitting behind me Mr. Bruce Ranger, with over 10,000 victories. A legend in the industry that has been, and still is, a dominant force anywhere he chooses to race. Yet like so many others, he chose to move back to Maine, because Maine is home, and the tradition of harness racing in Maine is special and just can't be replicated in other jurisdictions.

Last year alone, 156 trainers sent horses to the gate, driven by 91 different drivers. Both of those numbers are great indicators of the level of participation that we have in Maine racing right now. 81 of those trainers and 64 of those drivers are under the age of 50. As great as the history of Maine racing is, the future is equally bright.

I saw a cool video last weekend from a UMAINE frat house. I was leading a race coming down the stretch and about 20 college guys were cheering me on like it was the Kentucky derby. One of those students, and his family are new owners in the sport and own the horse I won with. They are having a blast. Five or six of those kids started following me on Instagram that evening, we gained some fans that day for sure.

If Maine had a showplace facility that we could be proud of and be excited about bringing in new fans and potential investors, I think we could exponentially grow interest and participation. Thank you for your time.

Regards,

Aaron Hall