

Michael Cushing
Maine Harness Horsemens Association

Distinguished Committee Members of Agriculture Conservation & Forestry

My name is Michael Cushing, I reside in Farmington and am the current president of the Maine Harness Horsemens Association. The Association, the Maine Breeders Association and Maine's two commercial racetrack operators have been working diligently to pave a path for a vibrant resurgence for Maine harness racing. The passage of LD 1611 is a vital component to that mission.

The passage of LD 1611 allows for the industry associations to work with the two commercial tracks in negotiating the optimum of race days that best serve the industry's needs. By reducing the number of days raced, it will benefit the industry in two ways. First, by reducing the days raced the average purse offered per race increases to a level that can compete with Plainridge Racecourse in Massachusetts, which currently offers purses two to three times greater than Maine. Secondly, a reduction of days will lead to fuller fields(i.e. more horses in individual races) and more races per race card. The combination of the two makes for a better product to offer to a broader worldwide audience. This is a formula proven successful by multiple tracks across America. That includes at CalExpo, a California based track operated by the same entity now operating First Tracks at Cumberland. There hope, as is ours, is to turn Maine around as they have done in California.

LD 1611 would also enable the Maine State Harness Racing Commission to allow First Tracks to operate it's OTB license at a location more suited to be successful. A majority of any racetracks revenue is its' simulcasting segment. First Tracks temporary place of operation Cumberland Fairgrounds, is not structurally or geographically suited to operate such a business successfully. The ability for First Tracks to temporarily operate in a more suitable location, will allow harness racing to be introduced to a new segment of clientele and broaden our fan base. All part of First Tracks LLC, Black Bear LLC, Maine Association of Agricultural Fairs,, the MHHA & the MSBOA's joint efforts to preserve our great agricultural industry.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Mike Cushing

President
Maine Harness Horsemens Association