

Jason Vafiades
Freeport

Dear esteemed members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee (ACFC),

My name is Jason Vafiades. I am the president of the Maine Standardbred Breeders and Owners Association (MSBOA).

As you workshop this bill today, I realized that I had not formally submitted testimony on this particular bill, but wanted to just reach out to a little more informally and discuss how excited the MSBOA community is to have Mike Cianchette and First Tracks as a partner in the Maine Harness Racing Industry.

I have been working with Mike and his team over the last year and we are thrilled and thankful for his support of our breeding and racing program. We've worked together to promote our class of horses in their daily racing cards, and this simple coordinate has far-reaching effects for our horses beyond their statutory Stakes Program through the Racino Cascade.

Because of the good will and excitement generated by the first US commercial racetrack in 25 years to open without the benefit of a casino, I have new potential breeders looking at entering the program. And I have current breeders looking to expand.

The MSBOA program is more than just racing horses. For each horse in our program, their journey starts some 3 years before they even make it to their first stakes race. We have to breed to a sire that stands in Maine, after which the mare gestates for 11 months. After birth, that takes another 16-20 months to reach it's 2 year old season, at which point it begins training with the hopes of racing for the next two years in the Sire Stakes program. At the commencement of their three year old racing season, we now have incentives, thanks First Tracks, to retain these horses even longer and race a long career in the State of Maine to support the entire harness racing industry.

For each horse that we have in our program, it averages out to be approximately \$30-35k in expenditures before they enter their first race. The owners distribute this money to breeding farms, veterinarians, boarding farms, farriers, support farms (buying hay and other locally harvested products), tack shops, local gas stations (trucking), grooms, trainers and all other sorts of expenses.

Supporting First Tracks in their ability to compete on an even playing field with the other commercial tracks and OTBs is the sole purpose of LD 1611. First Tracks is on its way to permitting and constructing a brand new, multi-modal entertainment facility that will feature Maine Harness Racing in a way that we've never seen. I've seen Mike Cianchette's vision, and it truly is a benefit to the entire State of Maine.

I thank you for your time and support. You're doing good work in this committee.

Jason

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