

June 5th, 2018 Testimony of Susan C. McDonough - NYS Humane Association

Regarding the Welfare of Racehorses

Chairman Addabbo, Chairwoman Martinez, and members of the Senate Racing and Wagering and Animal Welfare Committees, thank you for the opportunity to be here today. My name is Susan McDonough and I serve on the Legislative Committee of the New York State Humane Association.

I owned and rescued horses for over 30 years.

Professionally, I served 26 years with the New York State Police. I was assigned to the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, and my field of expertise became investigating animal cruelty.

Though there are many critical issues impacting the welfare of horses in NYS, I would like to begin by addressing the drugging of horses in the racing industry. In 2018, Senator Addabbo introduced Bill # S1976, which would prohibit the use of performance enhancing drugs in racehorses. A violation of this law would carry only a civil penalty. Yet, no other legislator, in either the Senate or Assembly, have co-sponsored this legislation, and it has not received any support from the racing industry.

Similar laws already exist addressing this issue, however, they are not being enforced. Section 180.51 of the Penal Law states: a person is guilty of tampering with a sports contest in the first degree when, with intent to influence the outcome of a pari-mutuel horse race, he affects any equine animal involved in the race by administering to the animal any controlled substance.

Also, the NYS Agriculture & Markets Law, Section 361 states: A person who willfully or unjustifiably interferes, or tampers with any horse or other animal used for RACING, exhibition or skill is guilty of a felony. Both crimes are E Felonies under current law.

The use of performance enhancing drugs should certainly constitute the interference of a racehorse, as well as the reckless endangerment of jockeys. These statutes are typically not being enforced in the racing industry. Therefore, oversight from an outside authority, such as the NYS Attorney General's Office is necessary to help end the overuse and misuse of substances in racing.

I would also like to speak in regard to the trucking of horses to slaughter. As a State Trooper, I personally stopped individuals hauling horses up I-87 to Canada for slaughter. I witnessed horses who were suffering from cuts, bites, kicks, falls; and often without food, water, or rest for days.

NYRA did adopt an Anti-Slaughter Policy. However, they have not supported legislation including Chairman Addabbo's bill - S1974, which would establish a commission to protect retired racehorses; and Chairwoman Martinez's bill - S5983, which would end the transport of horses to slaughter.

A recent survey entitled "*Causes Americans Care About*," undertaken last year by Ketchum, a global public relations firm, revealed that the number one cause people care about in America is animal welfare. I hope this hearing will result in laws and regulations that reflect these values and help to protect our cherished horses.

Thank you.