

I want to thank the Chairman and the members of the House Judiciary Committee for inviting me to testify at this hearing. I would also like to thank Representative Lynch for introducing HB 2127 to end the cruel and inhumane way horses are transported to slaughter in Pennsylvania. As currently drafted my 25 plus major PA and national equine industry supporters and I cannot support HB 2127 for the following reasons:

1. The vehicle safety specifications **MUST** apply to **all horses, not just slaughterbound**. The shippers will deny the horses are going to slaughter and there will be no enforcement. New York State law applies to all horses. Thus the law is non discriminatory.
2. The definition of an "intermediate handler" must be added so as not to interfere with the legitimate shipment of mares, foals, sick and injured horses

*Any person engaged as part or all of their business, in receiving custody, or maintaining horses for slaughter, leading to the transport of horses to a slaughter establishment, including a stockyard, feedlot, or assembly point.*

3. It must be stated that each horse is a separate offense. Small fines will not deter the illegal shipment of these horses.

#### Background on Transport of Slaughterbound Horses

Currently horses are transported in trailers designed for cattle and hogs, including double deckers. Horses of all ages, breeds and sexes are transported together with no food, water, or rest to Canada or Texas, journeys of 550 miles and 1500 miles respectively. The design of the trailers and the methods used cause injury and even death to the horses transported.

It is accepted in the horse industry that Pennsylvania is home to the largest weekly horse slaughter sale east of the Mississippi held each week in New Holland. This auction averages 250 horses each week with a large number purchased for slaughter in foreign owned slaughterhouses in Texas and Canada for human consumption overseas.

The issue of horse slaughter can be a very emotional and controversial issue, but when it comes to the point of whether or not horses fit into double deck trailers, it is really quite simple. I will defer to the witnesses from Brook Ledge Horse Transport, Inc. to testify to accepted equine industry design for trailers and methods used to load and transport horses. Federal Law regarding trailer heights does not allow a trailer to be higher than 13' 6". Trailers designed for the commercial transportation of more than six horses have ceiling heights that start at 7'. It is

impossible to have a trailer with 2 decks and provide the necessary height of 7'. In my research I have not found a horse trailer designed to transport 6 or more horses shorter than 6' 9". When ground clearance, floors and ceiling provisions are added, it is still possible to have a trailer with 2 decks and provide a height of 6' 9" on each deck. Double deck trailers have ceiling heights as low as 5' 7" with 4" support beams protruding even lower. Due to the fact that these trailers are designed for cattle and hogs, they lack the necessary safety features to protect horses from injury. The narrow doorways cause head and back injuries. The metal floors cause the horses to slip and fall. The overhead tracks for the ramps necessary to load the nose section and the top deck cause head and eye injuries. Designed for loading and unloading at cattle and hog facilities they lack ramps to unload horses, and are too far off the ground for the horses to step up into the trailer. Even though these horses are destined for slaughter, they are still alive and need to be transported and handled using trailers and methods designed for equines.

Requiring trailers transporting 6 or more horses to meet these safety standards will only affect the transportation of horses to slaughter, as horse trailers already exceed these standards. New York and 5 other states have had laws on the books requiring these safety standards for close to 20 years. I will defer to the witnesses from New York State to testify to the specifics of and justification for the New York Agricultural & Markets Law, Sec. 359-a.

The transportation of horses to slaughter is a black eye for the horse industry, passage of HB 2127 will bring PA in line with our neighboring states. New trailers or modifications to existing trailers can benefit PA companies, such as Eby Trailers. Recently a New York killer buyer had Eby design and manufacture a \$38,000 trailer in compliance with New York law. "Fit to Travel" certificates required under HB 2127 would benefit PA equine veterinarians, instead of the New York and New Jersey vets currently used by the out of state killer buyers. The complete description required would aid in the prevention of stolen horses going to slaughter. PA rendering companies would benefit from horses that are deemed unfit to transport and are euthanised. The safety specifications and fit to travel certificate would define for the shippers what is and is not legal.

Building an equine slaughterhouse in Pennsylvania is not a solution to the transport problem. In recent years the United States has gone from 14 equine slaughterhouses to 3. Connecticut passed their transport law due to the now closed slaughterhouse in their state. The horses leaving PA for slaughter have come from all over the Eastern Seaboard, not just PA. As horsemeat prices rise, so does horse theft., increasing the risk of horse theft to PA residents. Slaughterhouses do not look for stolen horses, and all the evidence of the crime can be disposed of in a matter of hours.

These magnificent animals, which grace our state seal, need to be transported safely, no matter what their final destination. I hope the Pennsylvania Legislature will represent the vast majority of Pennsylvania residents, and the equine industry, who want to see these horses transported humanely, and not a handful of out of state killer buyers representing foreign owned slaughterhouses.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify before you. I can now entertain any questions you may have.

## EQUINE PLACEMENT NETWORK

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Christine Berry

Twenty-nine (29) years owning horses

Ten (10) years showing and training Quarter Horses

Employed as Yearling Groom on Standardbred breeding farms.

Groom at Yearlings sales.

Employed by Brook Ledge Horse Transport, Inc caring for horses during transit.

Own and operate horse boarding facility.