



# NEW YORK STATE HORSE COUNCIL, INC

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March 14, 2017

To: Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner  
Senator Robert Ort

From: Stephen Ropel, President

Subject: **Support for Safety in Agricultural Tourism Bill**

**Assembly Bill 559 (Assemblywoman Woerner)**  
**Senate Bill 1152 (Senator Ort)**

The New York State Horse Council asks for your strong support on this important piece of legislation. The NYS Horse Council is New York's largest organization dedicated to the welfare of our horses and their owners and riders. Our members are increasingly concerned with their ability to acquire insurance and the cost of that insurance to protect them and their equine businesses. This legislation establishes limited liability protections for the inherent risks of inviting the public onto their farms and stables and adds a level of protection from litigation while using equine for their businesses.

There are equine businesses around our State who have reduced or eliminated activities because the cost of insurance or risk of legal claims are too great. Far fewer carriage rides and trail rides are offered across New York because of this. Equine assisted therapeutic centers are concerned about their liability risks. As a result, they are unable to perform the way they'd like to. Facilities that rent or simply let equestrians use property, including NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, have raised minimum liability insurance requirements to several million dollars of coverage which in turn considerably raises the cost of an event and often acts as a deterrent to hold an event.

Equestrians know that when dealing with an animal, there is always an element of danger no matter what precautions are taken in advance and they are not asking to be absolved of any responsibility for creating safe places. This Bill doesn't remove the responsibility of the horse owner, farm owner, stable owner or anyone from making every effort possible to keep their clients and visitors safe. It simply adds a degree of responsibility upon the client or visitor to understand that there is a degree of danger when anyone steps on a farm, visits a stable, pets an animal or is simply near one.

Many horse people around our State would welcome an opportunity to grow their businesses. Many are unable to because of the cost of insurance. Having the limited protection offered by this Bill will give them enough security to enable them to expand. This Bill is good for horse owners, stables and all equine businesses as well as being good for New York. Passing this legislation is the right thing to do and puts New York on the same level of protection as nearly every other state in the U.S. It may even encourage new businesses to return to New York.

Please support these Bills and help to see them pass. We appreciate your help.

*Stephen Ropel, President*  
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