



December 9, 2019

The Honorable Karen E. Spilka
President of the Senate
The State House, Room 332
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Robert A. DeLeo
Speaker of the House
The State House, Room 356
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Paul R. Feeney
Chair, Joint Committee on Consumer
Protection and Professional Licensure
The State House, Room 215
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Tackey Chan
Chair, Joint Committee on Consumer
Protection and Professional Licensure
The State House, Room 42
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

Re: HB 13 – An Act Relative to Horse Racing and Wagering

Dear Speaker DeLeo, Senate President Spilka, Chairs Chan and Feeney:

As you are aware, earlier this year, the Legislature enacted and the Governor signed the most recent extension of the Commonwealth's racing and simulcasting statutes, which previously had a July 31, 2019 expiration date. We are cognizant that the January 15, 2020 current expiration date is soon approaching. Therefore, in order to help ensure that the Commonwealth's racing industry continues without disruption, we are writing to express our support for another time limited extension of the Commonwealth's current racing and simulcasting statutes beyond the January 15, 2020 expiration date.

Although no live racing will occur until next April and although live racing has ended at Suffolk Downs, a disruption in these statutes in January would still have significant impacts as simulcasting continues at these facilities. Foremost among such potential impacts, a disruption would impact employees of the four simulcasting licensees' racing facilities such as pari-mutuel clerks, security, concessions, facilities and grounds personnel. Further, if simulcasting revenues are interrupted, this could potentially impact live racing once it resumes because simulcasting revenues are utilized to pay for live racing purses. In addition, the funding for the Commission's Division of Racing is dependent upon simulcasting as well as a daily license fee for each day a track is open. Thus, even a temporary shut-down could affect the funding available to the Commission to regulate the industry, once it resumes, and would cause continuing uncertainty for the participants.



Massachusetts Gaming Commission

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The Commission understands the significant other important legislative agenda items that have been before the Legislature this year and await the Legislature when it resumes formal sessions in January. We are mindful that a consensus has not yet been achieved on the future of racing in the Commonwealth despite all of the Legislature's efforts, the efforts of industry stakeholders, and the efforts of the Commission. In the ongoing efforts to achieve an understanding of the future of racing, we offer any assistance that may be helpful in the review of such statutes next year. In this regard, the Commission recently asked stakeholders to take a fresh look at the Commission's racing legislation, House Bill 13, the language of which was filed three years ago and refiled again late last year. The Commission recently reviewed the input it received and expressed its openness to recommend revisions to the language contained in the bill. We would welcome the opportunity to review these suggestions with you or your staff.

In closing, we thank you for your continued efforts regarding the Commonwealth's racing industry and hope that we can avoid any disruptions while we work hard to evaluate options to improve the industry in the Commonwealth. With the Legislature's support and some of the important measures included in the Expanded Gaming Act, we have seen a demonstration that racing can be successful in Massachusetts, with the sport's attendant benefits such as jobs and preservation of open spaces. For example, Plainridge Park successfully held 108 race days this year and is approved to hold 110 days in 2020, significantly higher than the 80 race days in 2014. The number of Standardbred broodmares has almost tripled since 2015, and the number of farms has increased also. This represents significant support for many Massachusetts bred horses, the many horse farms throughout the state, and the many jobs that support this industry. We hope that we all jointly can build upon this success. Thank you, once again.

Sincerely,



Cathy Judd Stein, Chair



Gayle Cameron, Commissioner



Eileen O'Brien, Commissioner



Bruce Stebbins, Commissioner



Enrique Zuniga, Commissioner



Massachusetts Gaming Commission