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**Representative Donald G. Marean
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Hollis. (Parts of) Buxton & Saco**

Good Morning Senator Cyrway and Representative Luchini and members of the VLA Committee. I am Don Marean from Hollis and I represent House District 16 which includes the Town of Hollis and part of the Town of Buxton and a small piece of the City of Saco.

I am here today to testify in favor of expanded gaming in Maine and a comprehensive gaming policy that moves Maine forward. I am confident this committee can and will put together legislation that will get the best deal for Maine. Comprehensive gaming should by all means include harness racing an industry that is over 100 years old and was the first form of legalized gambling in Maine in the 1930s when pari mutual wagering was passed by the legislature. The horse racing industry flourished for years and was able to stand alone on their share of the revenue from the bets placed at the racing venues. Then in 1974 along came the Maine State Lottery and the decline in revenue began and has continued to spiral as the number of lottery games became numerous and followed by Powerball and other games all of which had an effect on the harness racing industry. The first casino/racino which came to Bangor was an effort led by the harness racing industry as a way to subsidize the industry and stabilize it. Sure the industry made some mistakes during this effort such as allowing the casino to be built across the street from the race track not realizing that it would negatively affect the attendance and wagering at the track. LESSON LEARNED.

It is imperative that going forward that the racetrack be connected to the Casino to encourage and provide the opportunity for patrons to see and wager on the races as part of their experience at the Casino Resort.

In order to impress on the committee the importance of race track being tied to the Casino Resort and the benefits it provides as an economic impact we should take a look and see how beneficial it has been in other States that have required their casinos and or racinos be connected to the racing industry in their states be it harness racing or thoroughbred

For the past 30 years I have been and owner and breeder of race horses and I have also been on the board of directors of the United States Trotting Association for the past twenty years representing New England on their executive and finance committees., Having held those positions I have personally been able to witness what has happened to the industry during that time. The States that have no racetracks with casinos have continued to decline and are basically out of business. Each time a state allowed casinos that required racetracks the membership increased significantly and the numbers of horses racing in those venues exploded. You build it and they will come !

I encourage the committee to take a look at the latest place to require a racetrack at their gaming facility, Massachusetts where the gaming commission saw the benefit of harness racing and awarded their slots only license to Penn National Gaming the same folks that run the Hollywood Casino in Bangor. There was one only slots license available and the gaming board was not required by law to award it to a racing venue but saw the benefits of racing and realized that a slots facility with a race track had a much greater economic impact on the State than a stand alone slots parlor. I don't know about you but I find that to be nothing short of amazing and a common sense decision but we are after all talking about Massachusetts. If you apply that good common sense decision made by the Mass Gaming board to this opportunity here in Maine the economic impact here will be much much greater as we race at more venues 10 more as a matter of fact and many more race days than Mass. by atleast double the days. We have more horses requiring more open space and training areas all of which are a benefit to our agriculture based economy.

When the states of Delaware, New York, Penn and the latest state Ohio added casinos to their race tracks amazing things happened to the racing industries in those states. The numbers of race horses and racing opportunities expanded beyond expectations, the numbers of new owners and their investment in racing stock and equipment spread the economic benefits to unexpected new highs. Several new breeding farms were opened which attracted new employment opportunities and in some cases like Ohio increased the numbers of mares bred from a low of 700 a year before slots to a high of 2800 once the casinos were approved thats a 400% increase. Not only have these facilities benefitted the agricultural communities but they have also had a very positive impact on the attendance at the races and the wagering handle have increased substantially some tracks by as much as five times.

I am happy to provide the committee with any information that they would like on any of the issues around horse racing. The United States Trotting Association in Columbus, Ohio is the record keeping authority of harness racing in the US and has the records and statics available since the early days of dating back to the early 1900 hundreds.

I have served as Chairman of the New England District for many years and I am confident Maine could be one of the leading harness racing industries in the country. This committee has the opportunity and authority to include this very important segment of the agricultural community in your comprehensive gaming plans. Maine has been recognized as an important place for horses with its \$320 million dollar impact in our state such that I have just been named to the Board of Trustees of the American Horse Council in Washington DC. Its my hope that this committee also sees the benefit of horses to Maine.

Thank You.

Rep Don Marean
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