

LAEL STABLE

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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Whitfield and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your interest in the important issue of medications/drugs in horse racing. I am Gretchen Jackson. I am a horse person. I have been on a horse as a small child, as a teenager and as an old lady. I am passionate about the horse! I am the wife of Roy Jackson and together we own Lael Stable. Roy grew up around horses and his parents raced. We bought our first race horse in 1975, and have been involved in their training, racing and breeding ever since. Thirty-seven years in racing. When we got involved with the industry it was unheard of to have a two year old on Lasix and not the norm for an older horse. It is the exact opposite today.

I also worked for various educational agencies and schools having been trained to teach coping skills to young children with emotional problems. One of the sessions involved playing a video of a drug dependent society. It used to get a lot of laughs every time because of all the silly mistakes people would make while under the influence.

Well, now it is no laughing matter. Drugs have insidiously penetrated into the world of horse racing, endangering both horse and rider. By endangering, I mean threatening their very lives. Helmets and vests are great protection but not always. No leg wraps can save the racehorse who has been given performance enhancing drugs instead of time off to heal. Racing demands speed, speeds up to forty miles per hour. This means only the fittest and soundest horses should be competing. Many trainers use a veterinarian to enable a less than sound horse to compete, by giving the horse performance enhancing drugs. Vets profit from this service and trainers can do

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this because there is less than a handful of certified testing laboratories that are able to test accurately out of the nineteen in operation. I understand that there are more drugs being used on horses that are unknown, not detectable, than ones they can identify. Many tracks use less accurate testing labs to save money. Both horse and jockey face unknown danger under these conditions.

Roy and I raced a wonderful homebred horse named Barbaro. He gave us goose bumps every time he raced. He ran his heart out in the Kentucky Derby to win by six lengths. What a thrill to be in that winners circle with three of our four children and their families. Then going on from there to the Kentucky Derby Museum where we received more accolades while the Derby was played over and over again on the oval ceiling.

Our euphoria only lasted two weeks as Barbaro broke his sesamoid joint right in front of us only 150 feet from the starting gate. We ran down onto the track to be with him.

There is only one way to describe what it is like down there, standing by a seriously injured horse. It is heavy. The air is filled with grief. That scenario is all too easy to recall as it has been printed on my mind's eye and my heart. These are not forgotten by the fans. Many never come back to the races.

Drugs presence in the racehorse have created havoc with the betting fan too. Just go to a race betting parlor and listen to the disgruntled fans. They are trading the latest stories, whether true or false, that concern trainers and their appeal to the bettor. Many are wary and do not bet.

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So many of these horses and jockeys could be safer if drugs were not a part of racing. It is one thing to use drugs therapeutically after a race, another thing to mask problems before the race. The way racing is going is a no win situation for everybody, horse jockey, owner, fan and industry.

We need to regain the honesty, beauty and sport of racing. Allow the horse to be a horse. Horses are vulnerable. They have no say in where their birth takes place, or any of the how their life plays out. They only have us. It is time we are the best us we can be before we lose our dying sport.

I speak for a number of people who are either directly involved with horse racing or simply love watching the sport and believe that to preserve its future and to insure the safety of the horse and jockeys we must move forward to institute a ban on race day medications. Roy and I stand ready to help you deliberate on this important matter. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to testify today.