



Delegate
Geraldine
VALENTINO-SMITH

Responsible Leadership



Dear Friends,

Horse racing is a hot topic this session as the Legislature hears from various advocates and industry leaders on necessary improvements to Laurel, Bowie and Pimlico Racetracks.

The Stronach Group, who owns and operates all three racetracks, sent a letter in February to Governor Hogan, Senate President Miller and House Speaker Busch outlining the steps it is taking to strengthen Maryland's racing industry. [Click Here to read the letter](#). The Stronach Group plans outline a vision for a single "super track" at Laurel and a renovated training facility and equine health center at Bowie. These renovation/construction projects comport with the General Assembly's original 2007 plan for racetrack capital improvements.

Since 2010, Maryland's Video Lottery Terminal revenues have provided funds to the Racetrack Facility Renewal Account (RFRA). Maryland law only permits RFRA allocations to Laurel, Pimlico, Timonium Race Tracks, and the Standardbred tracks, Rosecroft and Ocean Downs. Senator Peters and I have introduced legislation this session, HB1070/SB878 to authorize the use of existing funds from the RFRA for renovation of Bowie Training Facility. The City of Bowie is in full support and participated in the hearings to assure the best possible outcome for the Bowie Training Facility. Another bill, HB 1190, introduced by Delegate Chang who represents the Laurel Racetrack, addresses the funding mechanisms for needed renovations to Laurel in order to bid on a Breeder's Cup race and potential relocation of the Preakness to Laurel.

My bill, HB1070, allows RFRA funds to be spent at the Bowie Training Facility. HB 990 and HB1190 address the racing industry and the pros and cons of moving the Preakness from Pimlico to the Laurel Race Track and the funding mechanisms involved. You can watch the hearings on these bills on the [Maryland General Assembly homepage](#) by entering the bill number and then clicking on the TV icon beside the Committee name. HB1070's hearing is short and primarily addresses the Bowie allocation of funds. For a wider view of the issues involved, I encourage you to watch the other hearings as well.

Legislation in 2012 preserved the use of the Bowie Training Facility as a thoroughbred training facility, and was intended to prevent other types of residential or commercial development. In years past, the Stronach Group entertained some discussions to sell some parcels and the City of Bowie actively participated as an interested bidder, but the Stronach Group ultimately decided to retain ownership. Recently, Senator Peters and I expressed our concern regarding the run down nature of the property and secured access to the RFRA account for the new fencing and grounds keeping.

Accordingly, given the restriction in law that the Bowie Training Facility be kept as a thoroughbred training facility, we are actively pursuing avenues to make sure funding is available to afford a high quality training facility. With respect to any environmental impacts that such renovations may have on our community, I have brought to the Stronach Group's attention the need for road improvements and a planning process that will include ample provision for public comment.

We have been coordinating with the Bowie City Council to ensure public notice, and ***the Stronach Group will present their plans for the Bowie Training Facility before the Bowie City Council on March 18th at 8 p.m.*** I encourage you to attend or monitor the public presentation and coordinate with the City Council prior to the meeting if you have questions you would like answered at the briefing.

As we move forward in this legislative session and beyond, I do encourage you to remain in touch with my office on any other matters pertaining to the future of both tracks. I believe citizen input in these matters is integral as we move in new directions.

Sincerely,

Geraldine

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By Authority of Friends For Geraldine Valentino-Smith, Elizabeth Ryan, Treasurer

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