



CITY OF DECATUR ILLINOIS

#1 GARY K. ANDERSON PLAZA

DECATUR, ILLINOIS 62523-1196

The Honorable J.B. Pritzker
Governor, State of Illinois
401 South Spring Street
Springfield, Illinois 62706
Via email

Subject: Horse racing project for Central Illinois (HB1852, SB1473)

Dear Governor Pritzker,

As you are aware, legislation pending in the General Assembly would help further the development of an exciting project for Decatur and Central Illinois. The proposed project includes a new harness racing track with grandstands, a gaming facility and a sports complex. With the support of the Illinois Harness Horsemen's Association, the Decatur Building and Construction Trades Council, the Central Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council, the AFL-CIO and others, backers of the project hope to get the development rolling upon passage and with your signature.

While the project would be a much-needed economic and tourism boost for Central Illinois, it represents more than that: It is a chance to revive the equine industry in Illinois. The closure of three horse racing tracks during the last eight years, including the iconic Arlington Racecourse, leaving only two remaining, has contributed to the weakening of the industry here and positioned our neighboring states to take advantage. Countless family farms, small businesses, veterinarians, truck and trailer dealerships, horse trainers, drivers, groomers and other ancillary jobs have moved across our borders.

One example of the potential impact: A 2023 independent Purdue University [study](#) by the Indiana Horse Racing Commission determined that Indiana's agri-business economy has benefitted from nearly \$2 billion in economic impact and has touched all 92 Indiana counties. Between 2007 and 2020, horses owned, trained or bred in Indiana increased by nearly 60%. This led to new job creation, new property ownership, business startups, economic support and new tax revenue.

The legislation before the General Assembly allows the project to move to the next phase of regulatory oversight (Illinois Racing Board and Illinois Gaming Board) and **requires no state funding**. It would allow interested private developers to move forward on what is now undeveloped, underutilized land near Interstate 72 and Old Route 36.

The project would create hundreds of construction jobs and long-term benefits, including for minority populations throughout Illinois. Minority-represented groups comprise a large portion of the horse industry workforce, particularly in Illinois, from groomers and caretakers to jockeys and drivers, and efforts to create additional opportunities are under way.

We are excited for the project to move ahead and are confident it will serve as a boost to an industry statewide that has slowly deteriorated and/or moved to other states over the last decade.

We would greatly appreciate your support to help Central Illinois register a "win" on economic development. Without it, our equine backers tell us the industry could disappear from our state completely.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Julie Moore Wolfe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Moore Wolfe
Mayor

cc: State Senator Doris Tuner
State Representative Sue Scherer