

April 8, 2022

Mr. J. Michael Hopkins
Executive Director
Maryland Racing Commission
300 E. Towsontown Boulevard
Towson, Maryland 21286

Dear Mr. Hopkins:

I write today to request the Maryland Racing Commission take formal action to suspend notorious horse trainer Bob Baffert for a minimum of 90 days. This move would effectively reciprocate the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission's suspension of Baffert, which was upheld by the Kentucky Court of Appeals on April 1st and began on April 4th.

Bob Baffert has a long history of drug violations in horse racing, and while it appears to be widely known and accepted in horse racing and equine circles that state racing authorities typically honor suspensions from one state to the next, the Maryland Racing Commission has not issued any formal statement we can find conveying action against Baffert as the California Horse Racing Board and New York State Gaming Commission have, and the public isn't generally aware of the reciprocity. The running of the 147th Preakness is set to take place in six weeks, on May 21st, and knowledge of Baffert's suspension could very well impact bettors and attendees planning to attend the Preakness Stakes.

As you may know, following a positive drug test taken from Medina Spirit at the 2021 Kentucky Derby, where betamethasone was found in the horse's blood, Churchill Downs issued a suspension to Baffert, and the New York Racing Association (NYRA) took action and disallowed Baffert from running the horse in the Belmont Stakes. Unfortunately, the Stronach Group, which owns and operates Pimlico racetrack in Baltimore, where the Preakness is held, chose to allow Medina Spirit to run in the second leg of the series, where the horse finished third.

The tragic death of Medina Spirit in December of 2021 at the Stronach-owned Santa Anita Park in Arcadia, Calif., underscores the need for every precaution to be taken to not only maintain the integrity of the sport, but to protect the horses we care so deeply about, and the Maryland Racing Commission has a fiduciary obligation to protect the betting public as well. It is imperative that the Commission take formal public action against Baffert so the public can make decisions based on the most up-to-date, clear, and concise information available.

We await your response, are glad to answer any questions you may have, and are available to meet via video conference or in person at your convenience.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marty Irby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marty" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Irby".

Marty Irby
Executive Director, Animal Wellness Action
Sr. Vice-President, Center for a Humane Economy

Cc: Governor Larry Hogan
Secretary of Labor Tiffany Robinson