

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 18, 2023

Ms. Lisa Lazarus
Chief Executive Officer, Horseracing Integrity and
Safety Authority
401 W. Main Street, Suite 222
Lexington, KY 40507

Dear Ms. Lazarus,

We write with great concern about the troubling spate of horse fatalities that occurred at Churchill Downs in the leadup to this year's Kentucky Derby. As you know, eight horses have died since April 27, including two deaths characterized by the racetrack as "highly unusual."¹ This magnitude of animal suffering is an unacceptable price to pay for entertainment.

Unfortunately, these deaths are not isolated events. According to The Jockey Club's Equine Injury Database, between 2009-2021 a staggering 7,274 thoroughbred equine fatalities occurred.² While we recognize the strides made to prevent racing fatalities, the American public is understandably alarmed by the risks to animal welfare demonstrated on the world stage in the lead up to the Kentucky Derby.

As you undertake an investigation into the incidents, we request that the results of the necropsies and a comprehensive report be made public to provide transparency and exemplify your commitment to the integrity of the sport. We also urge careful review of each horse's medical records to ascertain whether any preexisting conditions contributed to any of the injuries. Additionally, we request answers to the following questions:

- What steps is HISA considering taking to prevent future horseracing deaths, including in its enforcement of the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act?
- Is HISA planning to expand its investigation to consider a holistic perspective which examines how breeding techniques, equine medicine, and training practices contribute to horseracing deaths?

We were heartened to see HISA's racetrack safety rules go into effect last July and look forward to the robust implementation and enforcement of the expected Anti-Doping and Medication Control rules later this month.

We respectfully request an update 60 days after receiving our letter on the status of any investigations into the racehorse fatalities in the days leading up to the Kentucky Derby, and that you keep us apprised of any review of safety measures and what reforms can be instituted to prevent a similar situation in the future.

We look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Sincerely,

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/04/sport/churchill-downs-suspends-trainer-saffie-joseph-jr/index.html>


² https://jockeyclub.com/pdfs/eid_13_year_tables.pdf



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



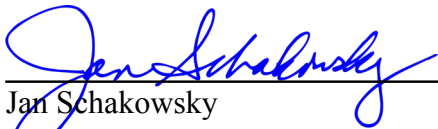
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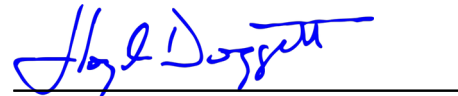
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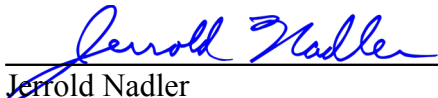
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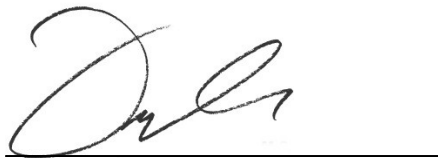
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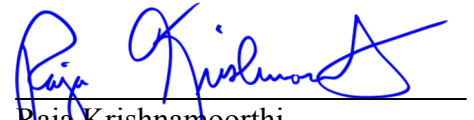
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Sheila Jackson Lee
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Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

CC: Mr. William C. Carstanjen, Chief Executive Officer, Churchill Downs Incorporated; Ms. Jamie Eads, Executive Director, Kentucky Horse Racing Commission