Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 17, 2026

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Steve Scalise
House Republican Majority Leader
H329-The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Emmer
House Republican Whip
H107, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Scalise, and Majority Whip Emmer:

We write to express our strong opposition to the inclusion of Van Drew Amendment 120 in H.R. 8870, the BUILD America 250 Act. The amendment creates immediate problems for the horse industry, livestock producers, haulers, and the broader agricultural economy. Further, the amendment was proposed under the pretense of being germane to transportation policy, which blatantly bypassed the Agriculture Committee's jurisdiction and its Members' input. We urge its removal from the final bill before it is brought to the House floor.

Amendment 120 comes directly from the long-running Save America's Forgotten Equines (SAFE) Act campaign, which has previously been referred to the House Committee on Agriculture. Radical animal activists present it as an animal welfare measure, however, this would only lead to worsened animal welfare outcomes while failing to address a real issue. Congress has already ensured that the United States does not slaughter horses for human consumption by prohibiting the U.S. Department of Agriculture from inspecting horse processing facilities, and exports have declined sharply without additional federal action. This amendment does not resolve a slaughter problem or a transportation problem, and does not consider the broad impacts it will have on U.S. agriculture.

Instead, the amendment creates new legal and regulatory risks for anyone who owns or transports a horse. The amendment's vague "reason to believe" standard exposes haulers, producers, and even youth competitors to liability. The language offers no clear guidance on when a trailer may be stopped, what documentation is required, or how intent would be determined. Drivers cannot control what happens to an animal once it leaves their custody, yet this language leaves them vulnerable. The amendment also raises serious animal welfare concerns. When compliance becomes confusing or burdensome, owners lose responsible options for aging or unmanageable horses. Abandonment increases, neglect rises, and rescues become overwhelmed. These outcomes harm animals and strain both public and private resources.

Federal regulations already prohibit the use of double-decker or multi-level trailers for transporting horses (Commercial Transportation of Equines to Slaughter, 2001, § 88.3(b)). Amendment 120 does not fill a gap in federal law, but instead creates a new enforcement structure that opens the door to future restrictions on the movement of other livestock. Once federal authority is established to regulate transportation based on perceived end use, that framework can be extended to any animals defined as livestock by the USDA, including cattle, pigs, sheep, and other species routinely moved in multi-level trailers. This precedent is dangerous for American agriculture and all livestock producers.

For these reasons, we strongly oppose including Amendment 120 in the BUILD America 250 Act. The amendment does not improve animal welfare, does not address an active policy problem, does not relate to transportation policy, creates significant new risks for livestock producers, haulers, and the entire horse industry, and endangers the U.S. agricultural sector. Moreover, the amendment sets a precedent that could restrict the movement of other livestock in the future.

We respectfully urge House leadership to strike Amendment 120 from the final legislative package and ensure that any future consideration of these issues reflects the needs of American agriculture and the importance of maintaining safe, efficient, and predictable movement of animals across state lines and borders.

Sincerely,

Tracey Mann
Member of Congress

Austin Scott
Member of Congress

Don Bacon
Member of Congress

Mike Bost
Member of Congress

Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress

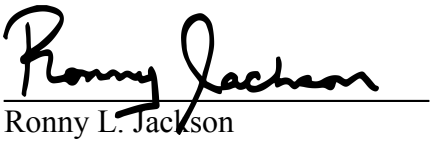
James R. Baird, PhD
Member of Congress

Randy Feenstra
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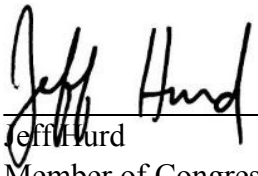
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Member of Congress



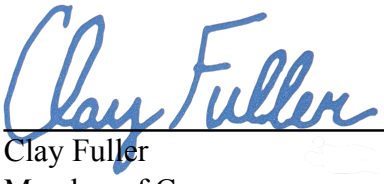
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Jeff Hurd
Member of Congress



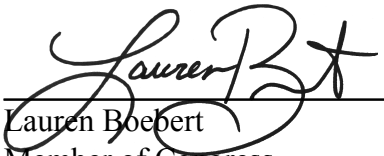
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Adrian Smith
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Lauren Boebert
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Cliff Bentz
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Troy Balderson
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Mike Flood
Member of Congress

Keith Self
Member of Congress

Ron Estes
Member of Congress

John J. McGuire III
Member of Congress

Cc:
The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules