



VIA ELECTRIC DELIVERY

February 9, 2023

**JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON
FY2024 EXECUTIVE BUDGET:
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

To the Chairs and Members of the Joint Fiscal Committees:

As president of the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association (NYTHA), I write to express our organization's strong support for the proposed project to modernize Belmont Park. NYTHA has represented the interests of Thoroughbred owners, trainers and the backstretch community at New York Racing Association (NYRA) tracks for over half a century. NYTHA was founded with the objective of serving as a collective voice for New York's horsemen and the equine athletes. Today, NYTHA serves as the New York State Gaming Commission's recognized representative of over 5,000 owners and trainers, striving to advocate for all horsemen and the backstretch community.

The backstretch community at Belmont Park consists of thousands of primarily minority men, women and families who are dedicated to the sport of thoroughbred racing and provide around-the-clock care to the horses stabled year-round at Belmont Park. NYTHA is proud of the fact they have spent the last three (3) decades developing not-for-profit programs in the hamlet of Elmont which surrounds Belmont Park. NYTHA and its not-for-profit partners such as, the Backstretch Employee Service Team of NY (BEST), the Race Track Chaplaincy of America (RTCA-NY) and Belmont Child Care Association, Inc. (BCCA), have strived to become part of the fabric of the local community. Under the Governor's proposal to modernize Belmont Park, these programs will continue to flourish. These important programs provide services such as health and educational clinics and child care services that benefit the backstretch community as a whole.

From NYTHA's perspective, modernizing Belmont Park is a critical step to ensuring the successful future of New York thoroughbred racing for generations to come. Belmont Park is the economic engine that drives the entire racing and breeding industry across New York State. Without Belmont Park, the Saratoga summer would suffer and the entire industry's ecosystem would be negatively impacted.

The executive budget proposal strikes the right balance of improving state property while demonstrating a strong commitment to the thoroughbred racing industry that extends beyond NYRA's franchise agreement. An added benefit to the proposal is that NYRA has the resources and ability to repay New York State for one hundred percent of the cost of the redevelopment with interest. The modernization of Belmont Park will also allow the NYTHA membership and other fellow horsemen to engage in long-term strategic planning. The proposal will remove any uncertainty within the thoroughbred racing industry as to the State's commitment to a robust and centralized year-round racing program. The benefits of our sport cannot go unnoticed. The horse racing industry and sport is the second largest agriculture industry in New York State. Statewide, horse racing sustains 19,000 jobs for New Yorkers and generates \$3 billion in economic impact.

All other professional sports in New York State have invested monetary resources to redevelop their facilities to keep pace with modern day societal needs. The Governor's proposal to redevelop Belmont Park is consistent with what other professional sports have recently accomplished and should be supported by the legislature.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the joint committee on economic development.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph Appelbaum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "J".

Joseph Appelbaum
NYTHA President

Cc: Senator Joseph Addabbo
Assemblyman Gary Pretlow