

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 11, 2025

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski, Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Merkley, and Ranking Member Pingree,

We write to you in our capacity as co-chairs of the Congressional Wild Horse Caucus and Congressional Animal Protection Caucus regarding a critical equine protection issue. As your respective Committees prepare Fiscal Year 2026 Interior Appropriations legislation, we urge you to retain longstanding prohibitions against the lethal control and commercial destruction of federally protected wild horses and burros.

We were concerned to see that the recently released Appendix for the 2026 Budget did not include provisions that explicitly bar the commercial destruction and use of lethal control on wild equines, and trust that this was simply an omission given the broad bipartisan support that exists for protecting America's iconic herds.

These protections have historically been included in the base text of Interior Appropriations bills, signaling the strong support among lawmakers for ensuring federally protected wild horses cannot be culled as a "management" approach. Versions of such protections have largely been in place since Fiscal Year 1988.¹

As the agency primarily tasked with managing wild herds, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) states that it "care[s] deeply about the well-being of wild horses, both on and off the range, and it has been and remains the policy of the BLM not to sell or send wild horses or burros to slaughter." Statutory language ultimately enacted via Fiscal Year 2026 legislation should reflect and reinforce that position. We greatly appreciate your own Committees' interest in this matter by including directives for the BLM to devote a higher proportion of its Wild Horse and Burro program towards administering proven and safe immunocontraceptive vaccines. Such an approach offers a sustainable path forward; euthanizing wild horses or facilitating their sale into slaughter flies in the face of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act which Congress passed unanimously and President Nixon signed into law.

National polling has consistently shown that the American public wants to see horses protected and overwhelmingly opposes their sale into slaughter. Troublingly, the proposed bill language in the Fiscal Year 2026 Appendix would also allow for the widescale transfer of our nation's wild equines to foreign countries.

¹ Congressional Research Service. Wild Horse and Burro Management: Overview of Costs. July 2022. Available: <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF11060>

Horse slaughter facilities no longer operate in the United States due to provisions included in the Agriculture Appropriations bills, but such slaughterhouses operate across the border in Mexico and Canada. We must ensure that U.S. federally protected wild equines do not meet this fate.

As co-chairs of the Congressional Wild Horse Caucus and Congressional Animal Protection Caucus, we take seriously our commitment to ensuring the welfare of wild equines so they can continue to exist and be enjoyed by Americans for generations to come. As part of the Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations process, 83 Representatives and 17 Senators signed letters calling for the humane management of wild horses and burros, explicitly requesting continued inclusion of prohibitions against commercial destruction and lethal control. In addition, 126 Representatives and 27 Senators joined letters calling for protecting American horses from slaughter.

We respectfully urge you to again include core protections for wild equines in the Interior Appropriations bill, including the standard provisions included in the Humane Transfer and Treatment of Animals section:

HUMANE TRANSFER AND TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

SEC. XXX. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of the Interior, with respect to land administered by the Bureau of Land Management, or the Secretary of Agriculture, with respect to land administered by the Forest Service (referred to in this section as the "Secretary concerned"), may transfer excess wild horses and burros that have been removed from land administered by the Secretary concerned to other Federal, State, and local government agencies for use as work animals.

(b) The Secretary concerned may make a transfer under subsection (a) immediately on the request of a Federal, State, or local government agency.

(c) An excess wild horse or burro transferred under subsection (a) shall lose status as a wild free-roaming horse or burro (as defined in section 2 of Public Law 92–195 (commonly known as the "Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act") (16 U.S.C. 1332)).

(d) A Federal, State, or local government agency receiving an excess wild horse or burro pursuant to subsection (a) shall not—

(1) destroy the horse or burro in a manner that results in the destruction of the horse or burro into a commercial product;

(2) sell or otherwise transfer the horse or burro in a manner that results in the destruction of the horse or burro for processing into a commercial product;
or

(3) euthanize the horse or burro, except on the recommendation of a licensed veterinarian in a case of severe injury, illness, or advanced age.

(e) Amounts appropriated by this Act shall not be available for—

(1) the destruction of any healthy, unadopted, and wild horse or burro under the jurisdiction of the Secretary concerned (including a contractor); or

(2) the sale of a wild horse or burro that results in the destruction of the wild horse or burro for processing into a commercial product.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and dedication to crafting bills that reflect the will of the American people.

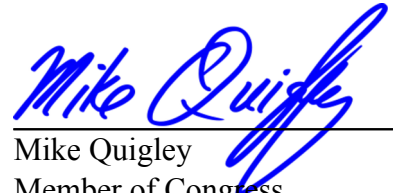
Sincerely,



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



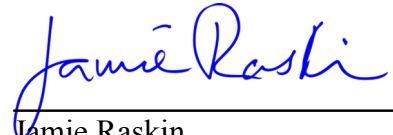
Nicole Malliotakis
Member of Congress



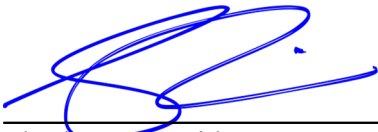
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Brian K. Fitzpatrick
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