



# STANDBRED OWNERS ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK

September 21, 2020

Robert Williams  
Executive Director  
NYS Gaming Commission  
1 Broadway # 600  
Schenectady, NY 12305

RE: SOA of NY seeks immediate assistance with resumption of pari-mutuel wagering at Empire City Casino/Yonkers Raceway

Dear Executive Director Williams:

As you know, the gaming floors at Empire City Casino re-opened today for in-person gaming and the horsemen of the Standardbred Owners Association are obviously pleased that the video gaming machines (VGMs) at the facility will once again be generating critically important revenue for both education in New York State and for racing purses that support thousands of jobs across the agriculture industry. However, while wagering on the VGM floors is now allowed with strict, comprehensive safety protocols, Empire City has not re-opened either its outdoor parimutuel windows or the racing simulcasting facility located on the fourth floor, thereby depriving horsemen and our industry a significant source of income –from wagering on races at Yonkers Raceway and simulcasting on horse races from around the country.

I am writing to request the New York State Gaming Commission's immediate intervention and assistance in re-opening the Casino's parimutuel wagering operations with similar strict and comprehensive safety guidelines as utilized on the adjacent VGM wagering floors. It is only logical to conclude that if the Gaming Commission can develop protocols for social distancing, cleaning, etc. for one casino space, then they can implement similar protocols for another...regardless of whether that space features VGM machines and cashier windows or parimutuel betting kiosks and teller windows. Again, this includes both the teller windows outside on the track apron (which are open-air and obviously present fewer safety issues) as well as the simulcasting facility on the fourth floor (which could be outfitted with electronic parimutuel wagering kiosks and scaled-down, in-person teller operations). There is simply no intellectually honest distinction between these spaces – other than the type of wagering occurring and the financial benefits to Empire City Casino from each – and so we see no reason that protocols cannot be implemented immediately to re-start parimutuel wagering in Yonkers.

Parimutuel wagering has proven to be a successful economic engine for agriculture and breeding across virtually every region of the state and we fully believe it is in the state's financial best interests – as part of its continued, carefully considered re-opening of our economy – to re-open betting at Empire City on both Yonkers' own races and simulcasted races (which also generate revenue for New York State). I would ask that the Gaming Commission immediately convene a meeting with yourself, the SOA and Empire City Management to discuss any relevant issues/concerns with such a re-opening and work expeditiously to put a safe and comprehensive plan in place. I thank you in advance for your consideration and assistance.

Sincerely,

President, SOA of New York

CC: Office of the Governor  
Hon. Joseph Addabbo, Jr., NYS Senate Racing Chair  
Hon. Gary Pretlow, NYS Assembly Racing Chair