

(S. B. 1108)

**(No. 185-2015)**

(Approved November 10, 2015)

## **AN ACT**

To amend Sections 12 and 31 of Act No. 83 of July 2, 1987, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Horse Racing Industry and Sport Act,” in order to promote horse racing education in Puerto Rico through the Breeding and Improvement Fund.

### **STATEMENT OF MOTIVES**

The approval of Act No. 129 of July 23, 1974 empowered the Horse Racing Administrator, as the executive officer and administrative director of all horse racing activity in Puerto Rico to, among other things, establish and supervise a Horse Racing Vocational School. Thus, the Agustín Mercado Reverón Horse Racing Vocational School (hereinafter, the School) was created in 1974 as a result of Act No. 129, *supra*, and, henceforth, has been one of the cornerstones of the Horse Racing Industry Administration and the Sport of Horse Racing, as well as Puerto Rican horse racing in general.

The School is accredited by the Council on Higher Education of Puerto Rico and has been responsible for preparing the specialized personnel that work in all sports aspects of the Puerto Rico Horse Racing Industry. Furthermore, it is the only public school in our Island and in all the United States that offers free courses for jockeys, trainers, grooms, jockey agents, veterinary assistants, horseshoers, and trotters, and the only school of its kind in Latin America. Thus, its existence is vital for the success and continuity of the Puerto Rico Horse Racing Industry as well as to maintain the quality of this renowned sport.

The School not only contributes to the vitality of the industry, but also serves as employment training for our youth. Therefore, at a time when our talented youths are leaving the Island, this School offers those who are interested in successfully integrating themselves into our society with a real option for self-improvement and to stay in our Island, as it provides these young citizens who are passionate about horse racing with the necessary tools to grow in this sport. In short, this School has brought great glory to Puerto Rico. Two of its most renowned graduates are Víctor Leonel Rivera Carrasco, who in 2013 won the Eclipse Award for best apprentice jockey in all the United States, as well as jockey John Velázquez, who has the earnings record in the United States.

Moreover, some of the most distinguished figures of the Puerto Rico Horse Racing Industry are Mateo Matos and Pablo Suárez Vélez.

Mateo Matos was born on September 21, 1922, in Santurce. He began his horse racing career in 1943 and passed away on February 19, 2013, at the age of 91. He was a distinguished figure in the sport of Puerto Rico horse racing and an example of honesty, dedication, and discipline for the new generation of jockeys in Puerto Rico. He topped the jockey standings for eight years and achieved 1,374 wins, 54 of which were in stakes races. One of his many achievements was being Camarero's jockey. While riding such an exceptional horse, both of them formed a perfect duo that would consequently craft, race after race, a story worth telling. This duo became such a fan favorite that racetracks at that time were too small to house the number of people who attended Camarero's races. Only a jockey with Matos' qualities could have led Camarero in his two global achievements: winning the Triple Crown in 1954 undefeated, being the first to do so in Puerto Rico, in this hemisphere, and the third Worldwide; as well as the world record of 56 consecutive victories established on August 17, 1955, thus writing a marvelous story that the sport of Puerto Rico horse racing continues to carry in its heart. After retiring, Mateo

received multiple tributes and recognitions. Two classic races and a trophy have been dedicated to him and he was inducted into four halls of fame: the Puerto Rico Sports Hall of Fame, the Puerto Rico Horse Racing Hall of Fame, the Río Piedras Hall of Fame, and the Santurce Hall of Fame.

Trainer and Groom (*palafrenero*) Pablo Suárez Vélez, another important figure in Puerto Rico Horse Racing, was born on January 1, 1904, and passed away on January 2, 1976. As a trainer, he broke five records, had eleven (11) winners in classic races in 1936, and saddled the world champion, Camarero, on his fifty-six (56) consecutive victories. He achieved one-hundred ninety-nine (199) victories in 1949. He was also the only trainer to achieve one-hundred ninety-eight (198) victories in classic races and had more than (4,000) winners from 1920-1969.

In light of the above, it is the intent of this Legislative Assembly to recognize the effort, excellence, academic and vocational self-improvement, as well as contribute to addressing the financial needs of outstanding young students by awarding two (2) scholarships, one for an outstanding young student jockey and another for an outstanding young student trainer.

In view of the foregoing, this Legislative Assembly deems it a pressing matter to create the Mateo Matos Scholarship, which shall be awarded to an outstanding student jockey who has financial needs in the amount of one thousand (1,000) annually, and the Pablo Suárez Vélez Scholarship for an outstanding student trainer who has financial needs in the amount of one thousand (1,000) dollars annually, as established by the Horse Racing Board from time to time. Funding for both scholarships shall be provided through the Breeding and Improvement Fund.

***BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF PUERTO RICO:***

Section 1.- Section 12 of Act No. 83 of July 2, 1987, as amended, is hereby amended to read as follows:

“Section 12.- Horse Racing Administrator—Authorities

(a) The Administrator shall be the executive officer and administrative director of all horse racing activities in Puerto Rico and shall have authority, without it being construed as a limitation, to:

(1) ...

(2) ...

...

(15) Establish and supervise a Horse Racing Vocational School, appoint and hire personnel as necessary for its operations and promulgate, with the approval of the Horse Racing Board, the rules and standards for the operations thereof. The School’s operating expenses shall be defrayed from the special fund created by Section 44(a), Subsection (b) of Section 11 of Act No. 2 of January 20, 1956, through the corresponding appropriation annually earmarked in the General Expense Budget of the Puerto Rico Horse Racing Industry and Sport Administration.

Provided, further, that the Horse Racing Administrator shall issue licenses to ride and participate in horse races to any person older than seventeen (17) years of age who graduated from the Horse Racing Vocational School.

The Horse Racing Administrator shall award the Mateo Matos Scholarship to one (1) outstanding student jockey with financial needs in the amount of one thousand (1,000) dollars annually, as established by the Horse Racing Board. Furthermore, the Horse Racing Administrator shall award the Pablo Suárez Vélez

Scholarship to one (1) outstanding student trainer with financial needs in the amount of one thousand (1,000) dollars annually, as established by the Horse Racing Board. Funding for both scholarships shall be provided through the Breeding and Improvement Fund.

(16) ...

...”

Section 2.- A new subsection (6) is hereby added to Section 31 of Act No. 83 of July 2, 1987, as amended, to read as follows:

“Section 31.- Creation of the Breeding and Improvement Fund.

(1) ...

(2) ...

(3) ...

(4) ...

(5) ...

(6) The Horse Racing Board shall confer, through regulations, two (2) scholarships in the amount of one thousand (1,000) dollars each. These scholarships shall be known as the Mateo Matos Scholarship and the Pablo Suárez Vélez Scholarship, as established by Section 12 of this Act. These amounts may be modified by the Board according to the time value of money. Funding for the scholarships shall be provided through the Breeding and Improvement Fund.”

Section 3.- Effectiveness.

This Act shall take effect upon its approval.