
MARYLAND GOVERNMENT

Nicole Earle makes history as first woman, first Black chair of Maryland Racing Commission

by **Victoria Mejicanos**
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Nicole Earle is making history at the Maryland Racing Commission, becoming both the first woman and the first Black person to serve as chair of the commission since its founding in 1920.



“Nicole Earle is the right leader at the right time and I am proud to appoint her as Chair of the Maryland Racing Commission,” said Gov. Wes Moore in a press release. “This appointment is a historic milestone for Maryland and I am confident her expertise and experience will guide her while leading our horse racing industry.”

Earle’s appointment comes at a critical moment as the Pimlico Race Course and Laurel Park undergo redevelopment.

“It’s personally and professionally rewarding,” said Earle, who previously served one year on the commission. “I’m deeply honored. I feel the weight of the appointment, considering just how large this industry is, and how important it is for Maryland in general.”

Earle said the Maryland Racing Commission oversees health and safety standards, enforces racing rules and ensures the integrity of wagering operations.

One of Earle’s priorities is to continue to maintain Maryland’s strong safety record while also increasing awareness of the many job opportunities the industry provides.

“Health and safety of the horses are really important, and the jockeys as well,” she said.



Nicole Earle is working with Gov. Wes Moore to sustain and improve the racing industry in Maryland, which contributes \$1.2 billion in wages in the state. Credit: Courtesy photo

Earle added that 99.7 percent of horses that raced in Maryland last year completed all their activities safely due to rigorously following local and federal safety standards.

“We’re proud of that achievement, and the goal, particularly, of the MRC, is to ensure that we maintain that record and improve if possible,” she said.

Earle also hopes to diversify and sustain the industry by introducing it to younger generations. She noted that the industry extends far beyond jockeys and trainers to include veterinarians, business professionals, marketers and several other occupations.

She said that horse racing supports 28,000 jobs and \$1.2 billion in wages in Maryland.

“A lot of people may just see the horses and the jockeys and think that’s it,” she said. “But there’s so many different careers. If you want to take the

medical track and be a veterinarian, if you want to be on the business side, the business side behind any industry is so vast. And I think a lot of young people don’t recognize that.”

Another major goal for Earle is to engage with key stakeholders through listening sessions and farm tours to better understand the concerns of those involved in Maryland racing.

“Being that this is a new role for me, one of the things I think that’s really important when you take on a new role is to make sure that you listen more than you speak,” she said.

As a Park Heights resident, Earle said the redevelopment of Pimlico makes the work especially meaningful. She shared that she hopes her work will represent her community well and help sustain the industry and thrive for generations to come.

