

CHRIS WEST
Legislative District 42
Baltimore County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Vice Chair, Baltimore County
Senate Delegation



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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January 26, 2021

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Senate Bill 24 – Gaming – Sports and Event Wagering License – Maryland State Fair and Agricultural Society, Inc.

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Committee,

Last year, Maryland voters overwhelmingly passed the sports gambling referendum. Senate Bill 24 is a very simple bill which provides that, if the State Lottery and Gaming Control Commission decides to issue sports gambling licenses, it will be required to issue such a license to the Maryland State Fairgrounds.

The State Fairgrounds is a deserving licensee for a number of reasons. First, the owner of the Fairgrounds, the Maryland State Fair and Agricultural Society, Inc., is a Maryland-owned 501(c)(3) non-profit entity. All of the revenue generated through the sports gambling license will therefore be used by the Fairgrounds for its charitable purposes. None of the money will find its way into corporate profit statements.

Examples of the good works of the Fairgrounds are too numerous to recount here, but currently, the “Cow Palace” at the Fairgrounds is being used free of charge by Baltimore County to administer COVID tests to the residents of Baltimore County, and there are plans in the works for the Fairgrounds to also be used free of charge by the County to administer COVID vaccinations. In short, the Fairgrounds is an exceptionally civic-minded presence in Baltimore County

Secondly, the Fairgrounds will be the ONLY sports gambling licensee in Baltimore County. If there is a determination to apportion the sports gambling licenses throughout the State, it will be important to ensure that Baltimore County is not left out.

Thirdly, the Fairgrounds is already the #1 Off-Track Betting location in the State of Maryland. Sports gambling will be run in the same venue in which Off-Track Betting has been so successful.

Fourthly, there is an umbrella group of 50 surrounding neighborhood associations which has already voted in support of the Maryland State Fairgrounds being a licensed sports wagering location.

Finally, the 140-year-old Maryland State Fairgrounds has critical capital needs, including its iconic 60-year-old Maryland State Fair Grandstand and Community Center. Any money inuring to the Fairgrounds as a result of sports gambling will be invaluable in helping the Fairgrounds to upgrade its facilities.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of Senate Bill 24 and of course will be willing to answer any questions of the Committee members.

SB0024/853524/1

BY: Senator West

(To be offered in the Budget and Taxation Committee)

AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 24

(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in line 6, after “entity;” insert “requiring the license to permit certain forms of sports and event wagering:”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 2, in line 1, after “(D)” insert “(1)”; and in line 4, after “INC.” insert “, OR A SUBSIDIARY OF THAT ENTITY AS THE COMMISSION MAY DESIGNATE.”

(2) THE LICENSE SHALL PERMIT THE MARYLAND STATE FAIR AND AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY, INC. OR ITS SUBSIDIARY TO OFFER SPORTS AND EVENT WAGERING IN ALL FORMS AS THE STATE MAY AUTHORIZE, INCLUDING IN-PERSON AND ONLINE.”.

GTCC

The Greater Timonium Community Council

9 B West Ridgely Road, box 276, Timonium, MD 21093

January 21, 2021

The Honorable Senator Chris West
303 James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Sent Via Email

Dear Senator West:

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 0024 concerning Gaming in the state. Back in 2019 our community council held an extended discussion concerning whether we would support additional gaming at the Maryland State Fairgrounds in Timonium. The consensus of our members at that time was to support sports betting at the Fairgrounds. At that time, I wrote a memo to our legislators in the 11th and 42nd Districts outlining our support. A copy of that memo is attached.

Since that time, we have not changed our position on the matter, and I support the current proposal to allow sports betting at the Fairgrounds as a general measure. In that this bill is devoid of more specific measures concerning how sports betting will be implemented, please keep me informed in the future of the proposed operating procedures for sports betting in the state. Those proposed operating procedures may trigger additional comments from our organization.

Sincerely,

Eric Rockel
President, GTCC

Maryland's Own Maryland State Fair

- The Maryland State Fair and Agricultural Society, Inc., which organizes the Maryland State Fair every year, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation governed by a 30-member Board of Maryland volunteers.
- The Maryland State Fair has been held at the same site in Maryland for 140 years, since 1879.
- In the early years, the Maryland State Fair was principally owned by the Maryland Jockey Club.
- In 1950, a buyer came forward and the Maryland Jockey Club planned to sell the Maryland State Fair so that an electric power tool and parts factory could be built.
- To prevent this, hundreds of Marylanders from every part of Maryland came together to form the Committee to Save the Maryland State Fair. This group included farmers, tradesmen, doctors, lawyers, homemakers, and others from every walk of life, and from all jurisdictions of Maryland.
- This group raised the \$500,000 necessary to prevent the sale, saving the Maryland State Fair.
- The Committee to Save the Maryland State Fair then decided that they never wanted to see the Fairgrounds developed for industrial use, so they chartered a new organization called the Maryland State Fair and Agricultural Society, Inc., with a mission to promote Maryland's #1 industry, agriculture, the preservation of open space, and the education of Marylanders regarding the importance of agriculture in their daily lives.
- These Marylanders who pooled their resources became the first "stockholders" of the Maryland State Fair, and today even more Marylanders are stockholders of the Maryland State Fair, as more Marylanders came to participate.
- Because the Maryland State Fair is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the stock has almost no value.
- The Maryland State Fair exists today for the benefit of all Marylanders as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.
- Note: RFRA funding is currently divided up between Maryland's licensed racetracks as follows:
 - 80% to the thoroughbred tracks at Pimlico and Laurel
 - 20% to the standardbred tracks at Rosecroft and Ocean Downs
 - Pimlico, Laurel, and Rosecroft are owned by the Stronach Group, a Canadian corporation.
 - Ocean Downs is owned by Churchill Downs, a Kentucky corporation.
 - Timonium is owned by the Maryland State Fair and Agricultural Society, Inc., a Maryland 501(c)(3) nonprofit.