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**Written Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
SB 565 - Expansion of Commercial Gaming - Internet Gaming Referendum
February 28, 2024**

OPPOSE

Chair Guzzone and members of the Committee, AFT-Maryland asks for an unfavorable report on SB 565, due to the detrimental impact internet gaming will have on traditional casino jobs and the broader community.

Online gambling poses a significant threat to the livelihoods of thousands of workers employed within the brick-and-mortar casino industry. These establishments serve as vital economic engines, providing stable employment opportunities for countless Maryland citizens, including state employees, hospitality staff and maintenance workers.

Unlike traditional casinos, online gambling platforms require minimal physical infrastructure and human capital to operate. As a result, they are not significant contributors to local employment and do not offer the same level of job security and benefits as their brick-and-mortar counterparts.

Traditional casinos serve as more than just places to gamble; they are vibrant entertainment destinations that attract tourists, support local businesses, and generate tax revenue to fund essential public services.

By contrast, online gambling fosters isolation, addiction, and financial hardship. The accessibility and convenience of online gambling platforms make it easier for vulnerable individuals to succumb to addictive behaviors, leading to devastating personal and societal consequences.

We need to prioritize the well-being of our communities and safeguard the interests of hardworking individuals who rely on the casino industry for their livelihoods. Rather than embracing the expansion of online gambling, let us work together to support the traditional casino industry and preserve the jobs and prosperity it brings to our communities. Thank you.

