



February 28, 2024

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB 565 – Expansion of Commercial Gaming - Internet Gaming Referendum

Dear Chair Guzzone:

This letter is in opposition to *Senate Bill 565 – Expansion of Commercial Gaming - Internet Gaming Referendum*. SB 565 calls for a voter referendum on the legalization of iGaming.

iGaming is one of the most addictive activities available.¹ The ease of access to iGaming is expected to lead to more health and emotional difficulties that come with gambling disorders including substance abuse, depression, and increased suicide rates.

Currently, only seven states have legalized iGaming (Connecticut, Delaware, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia). All of the states with data have noted increases in helpline calls since iGaming began; Pennsylvania reported the lowest increase of calls with a 140% increase, Michigan was the highest with a fivefold increase in just the first month after iGaming went live. The damage that iGaming causes is clear.

Online sports betting is hurting Marylanders and adding another highly addictive gambling activity in iGaming is going to cause more trauma. We urge an unfavorable report on SB 565. If you would like more information, please contact Mary Drexler at mdrexler@som.umaryland.edu.

Sincerely,

Mary Drexler, MSW

¹ Morgan State University, Center for Data Analytics and Sports Gaming Research, "The Socio-economic Impact of Legalizing Interactive Gaming (iGaming) and Online Betting in Maryland." February 14, 2024.