

Testimony of The Cordish Companies and Live! Casino Hotel Maryland

Presented by Mark Stewart, General Counsel

In SUPPORT of HB 1192

Budget and Taxation Committee Hearing

March 26, 2024

On behalf of The Cordish Companies and Live! Casino Hotel Maryland, I respectfully submit this written testimony **in support** of HB 1192, which expands opportunities for employment in Maryland's casino gaming industry.

Labor shortages are the most demanding issue for the Maryland hospitality and tourism industry today. Employers at restaurants, hotels, and casinos around Maryland continue to look for employees to keep their doors open for normal business hours. The impact of these shortages reverberates throughout the industry, posing a significant challenge to maintain the standards expected by guests. While conditions have improved since May 2023, when 82% of the hospitality industry reported staffing shortages, the situation remains challenging. HB1192 will ease these shortages, while also providing appropriately tailored employment opportunities for persons involved in the criminal justice system.

Nearly one in three American adults have been arrested by the age of 23, as reported by the National Institute of Justice. Research also shows that a criminal record reduces the likelihood of a job callback or offer by nearly 50%. The effect is even more pronounced for African American men. A person's criminal record should not equate to a lifetime of social and economic disadvantage. The road to meaningful employment for such individuals is fraught with obstacles. When one seems to be overcome, another arises. This is the struggle for many of the justice impacted individuals in our State. HB 1192 opens the door to gaming industry employment for such individuals while simultaneously ensuring the integrity of gaming in Maryland.

No healthy economy can sustain a large and growing population of unemployable workers, especially in communities already hard hit by joblessness. Removing employment barriers will reduce the welfare rolls and social services costs, benefit local businesses, and ease social and economic burdens on families and communities. We encourage a favorable report on HB 1192.