



Testimony of Brian Hess
Executive Director, Sports Fans Coalition
Before the Maryland Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
In Support of SB 708 – Sports Wagering: Independent Evaluation of Sports Wagering
Content - Required
February 25, 2025

Madam Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in strong support of SB 708 – Sports Wagering: Independent Evaluation of Sports Wagering Content - Required. My name is Brian Hess, and I serve as the Executive Director of Sports Fans Coalition, the nation's leading fan advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that sports remain accessible, fair, and in the best interest of fans.

Founded in 2009, SFC is a national non-profit advocacy organization devoted to representing fans wherever public policy impacts the games we love. We are best known for leading the campaign to end the Federal Communications Commission's sports blackout rule, which we accomplished in 2014 despite massive opposition from the NFL and broadcast industry. We've also been on the front lines fighting massive media consolidations, equal pay for women athletes, college NIL rights, and ticketing protections for sports bettors. We also developed the Sports Bettors' Bill of Rights, which Maryland adopted in 2021.

The Sports Bettors' Bill of Rights is a set of principles that we believe should accompany all sports betting legislation. The Bill of Rights includes:

1. The Right to Integrity and Transparency
2. The Right to Data Privacy and Security
3. The Right to Self-Exclusion
4. The Right to the Protection of the Vulnerable
5. The Right to Recourse

Since Maryland legalized sports wagering, we've seen an explosion of sports betting content across media channels, social networks, and advertising platforms. While Maryland has led the nation in responsible gaming safeguards, fans still lack a critical component: an independent, objective evaluation of the content being presented to consumers. SB 708 aims to fill this gap by ensuring that sports wagering content is scrutinized for fairness, accuracy, and adherence to



responsible gaming principles. It also strengthens the first and fourth rights of sports bettors – “Integrity and Transparency” and “the Protection of the Vulnerable.”

The reality is that sports fans are being inundated with promotional offers, betting advice, and advertisements—many of which do not properly disclose risks, provide balanced information, or clearly differentiate between editorial and promotional content. Without an independent evaluator, misinformation and misleading marketing tactics can go unchecked, manipulating the marketing and creating significant harm for Maryland’s sports fans.

An independent evaluation of sports wagering content would also encourage fans to leave illegal, offshore sports books in favor of well-regulated ones by offering them something the illegal operators cannot offer:

1. **Consumer Protections** – ensuring that sports betting content is fact-based, transparent, and does not exploit vulnerable populations, including minors and individuals at risk for problem gambling.
2. **Market Integrity** – holding content creators accountable for misleading or predatory advertising practices, fostering a healthier and more responsible sports betting environment.
3. **Public Trust** – providing Marylanders with confidence that the industry is being monitored not just for financial compliance but also for ethical and responsible communication.

Sports betting is here to stay, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure that it operates in a manner that prioritizes fairness, transparency, and consumer protection. HB 922 is a necessary step to ensure Marylanders are not misled or exploited by unchecked sports wagering content. By passing this bill, Maryland can set a national precedent for responsible gaming oversight while fostering a healthier, more sustainable betting ecosystem.

I urge a favorable report on SB 708 in order to protect Maryland’s sports fans from misleading and irresponsible wagering content.