

February 10, 2025

House Ways and Means Committee
130 Taylor House Office Building
131 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB 17 – Internet Gaming - Authorization and Implementation

Dear Chair Atterbeary:

The Maryland Council on Problem Gambling strongly opposes HB 17, which would allow Marylanders to participate in a full casino experience from anywhere and at any time on an internet-accessible device.

Many studies have consistently shown that gambling addiction can have severe consequences, leading to financial ruin, family breakdowns, and mental health issues. The convenience and accessibility of iGaming platforms would only exacerbate these risks to Marylanders, as people can easily access these services from the comfort of their homes and on their mobile devices. The potential for increased addiction rates and its associated social costs should give us pause before considering the legalization of iGaming.

iGaming is already an international problem. In an Australian study, the rate of problem gambling among non-internet gamblers was 0.9%, while the rate among internet casino gamblers was 2.7%.¹ A study of international gamblers as a whole found a similar relationship between internet gaming and problem gambling, with the prevalence rate of problem gambling being 17.1% amongst internet gamers and much lower 4.1% amongst non-internet gamers.²

Additionally, the potential for underage gambling cannot be overlooked. By allowing casinos to be accessed online, age verification is near impossible to enforce effectively.³ Many researchers have found that gambling has been detrimental to the mental health of adolescents⁴, including increased rates of suicidal ideation, anxiety, alcohol and substance abuse, and poor academic performance.⁵

While researchers are still learning about the extent of the ramifications of iGaming, we know that there are risks already associated with gambling. This body continues to subsidize resources like the Problem Gambling Fund because it recognizes that Marylanders need help. For these reasons, we strongly urge an unfavorable report.

Sincerely,
Dr. Shandra Parks
President
Maryland Council on Problem Gambling
MarylandCouncilPG@yahoo.com

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4610999/>

² <https://www.nj.gov/oag/ge/2015news/ResponsibleGamingFinalReport%202015.pdf>

³ <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN12055#:~:text=Potential%20Challenges%20with%20Identifying%20Minors&text=This%20suggests%20that%20most%2016,ID%20than%20a%20driver's%20license>

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2533814/>

⁵ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12766444/> ; <http://youthgambling.mcgill.ca/en/PDF/OPGRC.pdf> ; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2533814/#b13-0130003>