

February 10, 2025

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

RE: HB 17 – Internet Gaming - Authorization and Implementation

Dear Chair Atterbeary:

This letter is in opposition to *House Bill 17 – Internet Gaming - Authorization and Implementation*. This bill calls for the legalization of iGaming in Maryland.

The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) considers gambling disorder as a behavioral addiction. In fact, it's currently the only behavioral addiction the DSM-5 recognizes. In certain ways, gambling disorder resembles substance use disorder. They both change your brain chemistry and can have features of withdrawal and tolerance.

There are certain populations that are more vulnerable to problem gambling, including people with low incomes who have more to gain with a big win, and young people, especially men. As access to gambling has expanded, psychologists and other experts have become concerned not just that more people will give it a try, but that more will develop gambling problems.

Gambling disorder has been shown to carry the highest suicide risk out of any other substance use or addictive disorder. Per the DSM-5, of those in treatment for a gambling disorder, up to 50% have had suicidal ideation and approximately 17-20% have attempted suicide. In comparison with the general population, people with gambling disorder have an (10%) increased risk for suicide.

This bill increases the accessibility of a potentially addictive and deadly activity. I urge an unfavorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher J. Tundo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christopher J. Tundo, PMHNP-BC