

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Third Reader

Senate Bill 970

(Senators Zucker and Ferguson)

Budget and Taxation

Ways and Means

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**Sports Wagering - Independent Evaluation of Sports Wagering**

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This bill requires, instead of authorizes as specified in current law, a sports wagering licensee or sports wagering operator that advertises in the State to contract with a licensed independent evaluator to evaluate and rate the sports wagering licensee’s sports wagering content, sports wagering experts, sports wagering influencers, and content partners. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026, contingent on the State Lottery and Gaming Control Commission (SLGCC) issuing licenses to at least three independent evaluators.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** The bill does not materially affect State finances. If three independent evaluators are licensed under the bill, license revenues may potentially increase minimally beginning in FY 2027.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential meaningful.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** Chapter 638 of 2023 requires SLGCC to license independent evaluators to evaluate and rate sports wagering content provided by sports wagering experts, sports wagering influencers, and content partners. In order to be licensed, an independent evaluator must meet specified criteria. A sports wagering licensee or sports wagering operator that advertises in the State may contract with a licensed independent evaluator. An independent evaluator and its principals and employees may not wager on a sporting event. An independent evaluator may not be compensated by a sports wagering licensee or

sports wagering operator that uses the evaluator's evaluation services solely for marketing materials but may be compensated for its evaluation and rating of sports wagering content.

Under COMAR 36.10.06.04, the State Lottery and Gaming Control Agency may issue a license for a Tier 1 contractor that is an independent evaluator. For a Tier 1 sports wagering contractor, the application fee is \$1,500, the license fee is \$2,500, and the background investigation deposit is \$2,000.

**Small Business Effect:** Small businesses that are sports wagering licensees must contract with a licensed independent evaluator if they wish to continue advertising in the State if the bill's contingency is met.

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### **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 708 and HB 922 of 2025 and SB 1066 and HB 1291 of 2024.

**Designated Cross File:** HB 1612 (Delegate Ebersole) - Ways and Means.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Lottery and Gaming Control Agency; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 6, 2026  
jg/jrb Third Reader - March 23, 2026

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