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Judicial Proceedings Committee

Vice Chair, Baltimore County
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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January 29, 2020

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Senate Bill 58 – Expansion of Commercial Gaming – Referendum – Sports Wagering

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Committee,

Many of Maryland's surrounding states have already legalized sports betting, including West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Washington, D. C. and New Jersey. These states are generating significant revenues from their sports betting franchises while Maryland sits on the sidelines, notwithstanding Maryland's urgent need for more revenues in order to pay for the Kirwan Commission reforms.

Senate Bill 58 is a very simple bill. It enables the General Assembly to authorize the State Lottery and Gaming Control Commission to issue sports wagering licenses to video lottery operation license holders and to thoroughbred racing and harness racing license holders. Senate Bill 58 thus makes it clear that any licensed thoroughbred racing track, no matter its length, may obtain a sports wagering license. Specifically, this will include the thoroughbred racing facility at the Maryland State Fairgrounds, which is in my legislative district.

Senate Bill 58 does three other things. It states that it is the intent of the General Assembly that the State revenues generated by sports wagering shall be used for dedicated purposes, including the funding of public education. Secondly, it requires that before the bill becomes effective, it must be submitted to a referendum in this fall's General Election. Third, the drafter in the Department of Legislative Services advised me that the language in Senate Bill 58 is fully sufficient to authorize the State Lottery and Gaming Commission to promulgate regulations that will authorize sports gaming in Maryland to be conducted via mobile device.

One last word about the language of Senate Bill 58. You will see that the bill is extremely concise. Inasmuch as any laws of this State relating to gambling get included in the State

Constitution, I feel that the bill should be as short as possible. A simple authorization for Maryland to license sports wagering should suffice. There is no need for a lot of detail as to how the sports gambling will be conducted. Frankly, the fewer details that are included in the State Constitution the better. In that way, if the practice of sports gambling should change in future years, there will be no need to conduct another statewide referendum in order to implement the changes.