



February 15, 2023

Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB 267 – Internet Gaming – Authorization and Implementation – Letter of
Opposition

Dear Chair Guzzone:

This letter is in opposition of SB267, which puts up for referendum the issuance of internet gaming licenses to video lottery operators in the State. This would authorize licensees to conduct casino-style gaming over the internet, allowing customers to receive the full casino experience from anywhere they please.

Internet casinos can present a bevy of public health concerns. First, and most obvious, it allows customers to participate in casino games (e.g., poker, blackjack, roulette, etc.) on any device with internet connectivity. In Maryland, these games are only accessible at a brick-and-mortar casino. Having the offerings of a casino at one's fingertips can result in increased problem gambling behavior. Numerous international studies have found that internet casino gaming has a greater prevalence of problem gambling than brick-and-mortar casino gaming.¹ 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%.² 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.³

There is currently not much research on the public health issues posed by internet casino gaming in the United States, as only six states currently allow online casinos.⁴ However, one of the first states to adopt legislation allowing internet gaming, New Jersey, has some alarming statistics. They prided themselves as leaders in the internet gaming industries, and thus emphasized the Responsible Gaming (RG) features that would accompany online casinos, such as the ability to

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

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4610999/>

³ <https://www.nj.gov/oag/ge/2015news/ResponsibleGamingFinalReport%202015.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.playusa.com/us/>



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set deposit and time limits, and the option to self-exclude.⁵ However, even with these RG measures in place, it was found that the use of these measures was very low, with only around 1% of all internet gaming account holders in the state accessing the most popular RG measure – the deposit limit.⁶ This emphasizes that the likely increase in problem gambling that could result from internet gaming cannot be curtailed by accompanying RG measures.

We are still just in the beginning stages of learning about the ramifications of mobile sports betting and have already seen a rise in problem gambling helpline calls since it was legalized. Legalizing internet gaming, which has a troubling correlation with increases in problem gambling across the country, on top of mobile sports betting, has the potential to cause a problem gambling epidemic. For these reasons, the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling opposes SB267.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Drexler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" and last name "Drexler" clearly legible.

Mary Drexler, MSW
Director of Operations
Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling
Office Direct: 667-214-2124
Cell Phone: 860-798-9086
Email: mdrexler@som.umaryland.edu

⁵ <https://www.nj.gov/oag/ge/2015news/ResponsibleGamingFinalReport%202015.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.nj.gov/oag/ge/2015news/ResponsibleGamingFinalReport%202015.pdf>