



Testimony offered on behalf of:
Richard Wildt

IN OPPOSITION TO:

SB 603– Internet Gaming
Budget and Taxation Committee
Hearing: 2/28/2024 @ 1:00 pm

Good afternoon Mister Chairman and Honorable Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee.

I am here on behalf of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 27. My name is Richard Wildt. I am the Executive Vice President of the Union.

Local 27 represents employees at Maryland Live Casino, Hollywood Casino in Perryville and Rocky Gap Casino. In other words, we represent employees at 3 of the 6 casinos in the State of Maryland. In the gaming industry alone, we represent over approximately 3000 employees in the State. Locally, across all industries, we represent over 15,000 employees.

As a local union, Local 27 has been and remains quite active in local politics. We make our voices heard in a variety of ways to local politicians.

Local 27 is extremely concerned about the proposed legislation on iGaming. We do not take this position lightly. We have done our own research, consulted with unions in other States and read the reports issued by various “experts.” On that point, I want to call out the very slanted and clearly biased report from the Innovation Group, an entity that operates in the iGaming space and is seeking to persuade you to approve iGaming so they and their allies can make money off of Marylanders. Their position, and report, is rooted in greed.

I am here today to OPPOSE SB 603.

It is undisputed that iGaming will significantly reduce visits to traditional, brick-and-mortar casinos. When, not if, volume is reduced at gaming properties, it will adversely impact our members and the prospects of job security for those remaining.

One regional example is compelling. In the years since iGaming launched in Pennsylvania, multiple casinos requested to reduce the numbers of slot machines at their facilities, which hurt employment levels. As per reports from the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board, despite five (5) new casinos opening – the workforce in Pennsylvania casinos has suffered a cut of nearly 10%, with more than 2000 employees losing their jobs.

Since casino gaming was legalized in Maryland, we have negotiated five labor agreements at Maryland Live, three labor agreements at Hollywood Casino in Perryville and two labor

agreements in Rocky Gap. In each of those bargaining sessions, our members were able to secure higher pay, benefit improvements and confidence in their career selection.

Our members, many of whom came from industries that shut down in the last recession, finally felt they had job security.

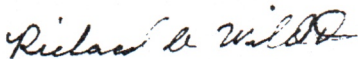
To state it clearly: iGaming is a jobs killer. Everywhere it has been introduced, it reduced staff at brick and mortar casinos. When, not if, that happens in Maryland, it will hurt our members.

The irony of my appearance today, to testify against iGaming, is not lost on me. Normally, management and labor are on different sides of various economic arguments. But today, we are on the same page. iGaming will hurt brick and mortar casinos. When volume is reduced, wages and benefits and ultimately jobs will be reduced. When that happens, our members will suffer.

Today, our members in the gaming industry earn a good income, with solid health benefits and job protections. The security of these jobs now rests with you, our elected leaders. You can decide to "roll the dice" and focus on revenue needs, or protect the jobs that exist in the State.

I urge you to vote against SB 603.

Respectfully,



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