



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**HB 1319 - Internet Gaming - Authorization and Implementation
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
March 26, 2024**

OPPOSE

Donna S. Edwards

President

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 1319 and internet gaming. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 300,000 union members in the state of Maryland, I offer the following comments.

Internet Gaming will lead to job losses in brick and mortar casinos. The State commissioned report from the Innovation Group reached this conclusion, predicting a 10.2% decrease in in-person revenues. A comparable 10.2% reduction in casino staffing would be 2,700 jobs. The Sage report reached a similar conclusion, using more conservative numbers, predicting at least 1,200 lost jobs. Maryland's House of Delegates acknowledged I-Gaming will reduce jobs by passing Amendment HB1319/823325/1 which creates an employee displacement fund, providing \$10,000,000 of additional unemployment insurance assistance and retraining for brick and mortar casino workers that lose their jobs due to Internet Gaming. This amendment passed on a voice vote with no vocal opposition.

The proponents' arguments do not add up. When making a bet, you have to know the odds in order to know whether you think the risk is worth the reward. With Internet Gaming, we already know the risks are tremendous. No one seems to disagree. If the state's rewards are supposed to be increased revenues, legislators should ask themselves whether they really think cutting thousands of middle-class tax paying jobs is the soundest path towards steady revenue. Meanwhile the state will unleash an unprecedented increase in problem gaming and addiction.

Do not gamble Maryland's future on I Gaming. These numbers do not add up. Vote no on HB 1319.