

Testimony Against
SB 0603 Internet Gaming – Authorization and Implementation
SB 0565 Expansion of Commercial Gaming - Internet Gaming referendum

Before the Maryland Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Presented by

Beverly Fiedler, Bartender at the Ocean Downs Casino

Good afternoon. My name is Beverly Fiedler. I am a bartender at the Ocean Downs Casino in Berlin Maryland where I have worked for 13 years.

Thank you Chairman Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe and members of the committee for this opportunity.

I am a proud member of UNITE HERE Local 7. Today I am speaking for all of the employees at our Casino—union and non-union to say that we are opposed to both SB 603 and SB 565 and any other legislation that would advance iGaming in the State of Maryland.

As a New Jersey resident I had enjoyed summers at the Maryland shore for many years. I always wanted to move here but the economics did not work.

Most of the hospitality jobs around Ocean City are part time and seasonal. I needed a year-round full-time job that provided health insurance, a retirement plan--decent benefits.

When I learned that the Casino was going to open, I got my resume in early. I was able to move to Ocean Pines, Md permanently in large part because I could get a full-time, year-round job at the Casino.

I started in the cleaning department, EVS. I worked my way up to food concessions, then to working as a bartender at the main bar. I am not exaggerating to say that this is the best bartender job Ocean City. Our wages go up every year, we have paid sick days, paid personal days, paid vacation days, we have regular days off. When we work on a holiday, we are paid 2 ½ times our normal hourly rate of pay, we have Union job security and rights.

At least 50% of my income comes from tips given to me directly by customers. The larger the number of customers in the Casino on a given day the more I earn in tips.

So when we learned that iGaming is being considered for Maryland, we were of course upset. Every report shows traffic to the Casinos declining with iGaming. If our customer base goes down, our income will absolutely go down. But our rents, mortgage, utility, food, prescriptions, and transportation costs will not be going down.

The introduction of iGaming will hurt thousands of Maryland Casino workers and our families. iGaming will take good jobs out of our communities.

Please give an unfavorable report on bills SB 565 and SB 603.