

Written Testimony of Joshua John

In Opposition to House Bill 1319

March 26th, 2024

My name is Joshua John. I am a 21-year-old undergraduate student in my final year at the University of Maryland. During my time at college, I have seen the detrimental effects of online gambling and its constant availability firsthand. As this committee considers legalizing internet gaming, I find it important to consider the effects similar legislation has had on young adults across the country. It would be difficult to discuss the significance of legalizing internet gaming without first discussing that of online sports gambling in the state. Immediately after sports gambling was legalized in Maryland, many of my peers downloaded the various apps, believing they would have a new fun activity to compete against their friends. I found my own roommates gambling daily, betting money they knew they didn't have. They skirted age requirements by using older friends' accounts and wagered funds meant for textbooks on online betting instead. In lieu of cutting their losses, each time they lost a bet, they counterintuitively saw an opportunity to win that money back by placing a higher bet in the future. With the advent of constant access to gambling, I watched their new addictions bloom in my very own dorm room.

Concerningly, there is legitimate reason to believe that HB1319 would have even more detrimental effects on young adults than the legalization of online sports betting. This legislation effectively allows the thrilling lights, rewards, and dopamine boosts of a casino to be accessed at one's own fingertips 24/7, 365 days a year. Unlike sports gambling that has specific game times, players, and kinds of bets that can be placed, internet gaming as a whole has no such inherent guardrails. With no allotted hours of the day, no daily limits on money spent, and every kind of casino game imaginable available, the cause for worry cannot be overstated when it comes to the

state's vulnerable college students. An NIH study conducted in 2015 found that students who engaged in internet gambling were more likely to miss school, struggle with anxiety, and report family issues stemming from their gambling addiction. Further, the report cites that gambling problems accelerated by internet gambling are associated with higher rates of academic failure, alcohol consumption, and drug abuse. I fear the consequences that legalizing internet gaming in Maryland would have on the state's college students would be endless. As such, I urge a strong unfavorable report on this bill.

Relevant Citations

Petry NM, Gonzalez-Ibanez A. Internet gambling in problem gambling college students. *J Gambl Stud.* 2015 Jun;31(2):397-408. doi: 10.1007/s10899-013-9432-3. PMID: 24337905; PMCID: PMC4055543.