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The United Baptist Missionary Convention

& AUXILIARIES OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND, INC.

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Dear Governor Wes Moore,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits in the name of the Lord. I am writing to you as the President of the United Baptist Missionary Convention and Auxiliaries of the State of Maryland, Inc., representing over one hundred thirty churches and approximately twenty-six thousand congregational members in Maryland. **We are having our National Convention in Maryland this year and will have 100,000 Delegates with us in Maryland for almost a week.** On behalf of our member churches, I send this letter with utmost concern regarding the pending consideration of the legalization of online gambling, and we would like to express our deep reservations about this matter.

We have learned from our brothers that in those very few states that have iGaming it has been a disaster for our folks, especially the teenagers. In addition, I have witnessed firsthand the detrimental effect of gambling on the vulnerable members of our society, particularly those in the Black community. It is indisputable that Black Americans are the target of online gambling advertisements. Go to any casino in Maryland, and you will primarily see, without question, more Black people than any other race, which is not by accident. Gambling, like any big business, targets its customer base. The fact that FanDuel, Draft Kings, and other internet gambling companies use Black comedians and actors to pitch their platforms is intentional.

The allure of internet gambling, with its promise of convenient entertainment and substantial winnings, can particularly appeal to individuals in our community seeking quick financial solutions. However, this convenience can quickly lead to excessive gambling, further exacerbating the financial challenges one may be facing.

One of the most concerning aspects of online gambling is its addictive and destructive nature. Research has consistently shown a clear link between the availability of gambling options and the prevalence of problem gambling. Low-income individuals, who may already be grappling with financial stress, are particularly susceptible to the allure of a potential windfall. The ease of access that online gambling offers will result in an alarming escalation in gambling addiction within the Black community.

The financial hardship that often accompanies problem gambling is a grave concern. Low-income individuals are

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– Nehemiah 2:17-18, 20

Page 1 of 2

at greater risk of experiencing severe financial strain, including an inability to meet essential needs, accumulating debts, and even facing bankruptcy. The ripple effect of these financial struggles can lead to eviction and food insecurity, as well as depression, substance abuse, job loss, and social isolation.

An unintended consequence of increased problem gambling is the significant strain on public health and social services, which will divert resources away from other critical areas, disproportionately impacting Black Marylanders who rely on these services.

Furthermore, there is a concerning element of inequality and exploitation associated with online gambling. The industry profits primarily from its customers' losses, a disproportionate number of whom come from lower income brackets. Aggressive marketing strategies, as mentioned above, often target vulnerable individuals, including those from low-income communities, perpetuating this cycle of exploitation.

In conclusion, while we are not experts in understanding the revenue implications to the State, again we understand that there are concerns in the few states that have experimented with Gambling, and that thousands of jobs have been lost and it is not at all clear the iGaming Tax equals the loss revenue from other existing sources. Most important, the significant societal costs are paramount, I encourage you to examine the profound negative impacts of expanding gambling in Maryland. For the sake of Black Marylanders who might be susceptible to gambling addiction, the Legislature must prioritize the well-being and protection of our most vulnerable citizens as you contemplate legislation that expands gambling.

I beseech you to allow your moral compass to point in the direction of the well-being of those who will be held captive if online gambling is legalized. The Lord has called us to be good stewards of what He has given us. How can the Black community obtain generational wealth as the Black Caucus hopes for Black Marylanders while, on the other hand, supporting legislation that is damaging to the financial stability of so many Black families in Maryland? James Russel Lowell said: "Once to every tribe and nation comes the moment to decide." That time is now.

Below is a link to a brief video that further elaborates on our concerns. I pray that as a representative of a predominately Black constituency, you will take 10 minutes to understand further the damage gambling is having on the Black community.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I trust that you will consider these concerns earnestly and vote against any bill that seeks to legalize online gambling.

Respectfully,

Greggory R. Maddox

Rev. Dr. Greggory R. Maddox
President, United Baptist Missionary Convention & Auxiliaries of the State of Maryland Inc.
Pastor, Faith Baptist Church
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Attachment:

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/gigqagqa6886bh4oehe7w/Gambling-In-The-Black-Community_31Jan24Rev4.mp4?rlkey=grg9icdw3odsv6mys6fzgp3g&dl=0

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Page 2 of 2