



To: Chair Guzzone and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

Date: March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Re: Favorable with Amendments of HB 1319 Internet Gaming - Authorization and Implementation

On behalf of our clients Delta Bingo, Wayson's Bingo, Abner's Bingo and Atlantic Bingo, I write in support HB 1319 with amendments. Our amendments include providing halls with additional electronic instant bingo machines as well as allowing commercial halls in the State to operate i-bingo, as a separate classification of i-gaming.

Commercial Bingo has been a partner with localities and the State of Maryland for decades, providing millions of dollars in public revenue and charitable contributions. Our halls considerably predate casino gaming in Maryland and our industry has always been viewed as consistently good actors in Maryland.

In 2007 and 2012 there was a need for increased revenue for the state, and we played a crucial role in supporting that initiative. However, despite our contributions, the gaming industry continues to be monopolized by casinos. This has hindered innovation and progress within our sector. Even though we are not direct competitors, casinos continue to stall our attempts in advancing innovation in the bingo industry.

Bingo caters to a distinct clientele from casinos and therefore we are not direct competitors to casinos. Our clientele consists of a more elderly group that also enjoys live bingo in addition to the opportunity to play electronic instant bingo machines, which casinos' contend maybe competitive. The facts are evident: casinos in Maryland choose not to operate 7,500 slot machines the State does not derive revenue from as they prefer the lower tax rate levied on table games. We simply ask for authorization to operate less than 300 more machines spread among 6 commercial halls in the State.

In addition, the bingo industry – as the state's initial legal gaming industry – also wishes inclusion in the i-gaming enterprise. Among our businesses is an operator with experience in i-gaming as a license holder in Ontario, Canada. We, in fact, have more experience in i-gaming / i-bingo than many casinos.

In closing, we urge a favorable report on HB 1319 with our amendments to level the playing field in Maryland which has been skewed since the arrival of casinos in Maryland, as the impact of bingo has been neglected.

Sushant Sidh