

My name is Sandra Adell and I'm a literature professor in the Department of African American Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. But I come to you today, not as a scholar or researcher, but as an African American woman who like hundreds of thousands of other Black women in Maryland and across this country either has experienced or is currently struggling with an addiction to slot machine gambling. Contrary to studies that show that the majority of people who gamble do so without experiencing gambling disorders, problem gambling in the Black community and particularly among Black women is seriously under-reported. Which might explain why it's so easy to justify gambling expansion, in this case *igaming*, as a harmless form of entertainment. Perhaps those of you who are considering this bill before the Maryland legislature to legalize *igaming* are unaware of the social, psychological, and financial problems that are already happening in the Black community as a result of the incredibly rapid expansion of legal gambling, particularly gambling on electronic devices. For Black women like myself, there is so much shame associated with this form of behavioral addiction that we often suffer in silence. We often feel too ashamed to ask even those who are closest to us for help. We have always been strong for our families, our friends, our communities. But the rising rates of addiction among African American women to slot machine gambling, the lottery and scratch-offs, threatens to unravel everything we and our foremothers have done to improve our lives and those of others. I speak for the Black women who for myriad reasons cannot speak publicly about their struggles with gambling addiction. We do not bet on sports, which is now a hot topic in the media because it's targeting young men. We play the slots; we buy lottery tickets and scratch-offs. This legislation will make all of this available any and everywhere all the time. The result will be even more addiction, even more Black women and others in the Black community suffering in silence. On behalf of the Black women and others in our community who are already struggling to break out of this spiral of gambling addiction I beg you to reject this legislation.