

Testimony offered on behalf of:
Billie Stone

IN OPPOSITION TO:

HB 1319– Internet Gaming
House of Delegates
Ways and Means Committee
Hearing: 2/26/2024 @ 11:00 am

Good afternoon Madam Chair and Honorable Members of the House Ways and Means Committee.

Good afternoon Madam Chair and distinguished members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

I am here today to share a personal story about my life as an employee in the casino industry, and what iGaming would do to me and my family. My name is Billie Stone. As you can probably tell from my accent, I am from the Bronx, New York.

When I was in my early twenties, I decided I wanted to be a mortician. I went to school for Mortuary Science and after a year and half, decided it wasn't for me.

In 1995 my husband, who worked for General Motors, was transferred to the GM plant on Broening Highway. We moved to Maryland to make a better life for ourselves and our children. While he worked at GM, I got a customer service job selling durable medical equipment.

In 2012, I was laid off. Without any gaming experience, I applied to work at Live! casino. They hired me in 2013 as a Main Banker. After I went to school to learn table games, I transferred to become a dealer. Right now, I am on leave for a medical condition.

I have four grown children, two of whom worked in the gaming industry when they were younger. They are now out on their own, pursuing their own careers.

In the 20+ years that I have been in the workforce, I have never had as good a job as I do now. I love this industry and I love Live!. Before working in this industry, I was never offered health benefits, a 401k, paid time off and job protections. I now have all of these. This Company has meant everything to me and changed the course of my life.

A few moments ago I mentioned that I was on medical leave. Last year I had to have open heart surgery. I was out of work for 4 months. When I returned, in November 2023, I was so happy to finally be doing something again. Unfortunately, in early January I broke my knee, which required another surgery and another extended medical leave.

Live! has stuck with me through all of my leaves and medical issues. They treat me like family.

I am extremely afraid of what iGaming will do to me, and my coworkers. I know people will lose their jobs if iGaming is approved...it has happened in other States. I also know that those are people who have worked hard to earn a good living for themselves and their families.

Casinos are a fun and entertaining environment for people to go. Yes, there are casino games like blackjack, roulette, craps, etc. but there are also restaurants, bars and other places for people to relax. The same is not true of iGaming. If this Bill passes, you will be able to game wherever you are. You will lose the excitement of a casino, but also, be at risk to lose all the money you have earned. This Bill will ruin families.

Finally, iGaming will result in people, like me, being laid off. It will happen to every casino in Maryland. These are good jobs, filled with good people. Please don't let this happen.

I urge you to vote against HB 1319.

Thank you for listening.

Billie Stone

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