

2/22/2024

HB1319
UNFAVORABLE

Testimony offered on behalf of:
MICHAEL M. GIMBEL

IN OPPOSITION TO:
HB1319 – Internet Gaming – Authorization and Implementation

House Ways & Means Committee
Hearing: 2/26/2024 @ 11:00 am

Good morning, Madam Chairperson and Honorable members of the House Ways & Means Committee.

My name is Mike Gimbel, I am a recovering addict with over fifty years of sobriety, the former Drug Czar for Baltimore County Government for over twenty years and the host of a nationally syndicated television show called “Straight Talk” for over thirty years. I understand the power of addiction and have seen it destroy people’s lives, including teens.

I AM HERE TODAY TO RESPECTFULLY OPPOSE HB1319; legislation that you sponsored.

I can’t imagine a parent, grandparent or anyone who would support making online full gambling legal, simply because we know that underage youth will find a way to access these online websites.

The country and the States are currently dealing with teens and young adults who are purchasing fake pills from numerous Adult-Only-Websites and are dying because these pills are laced with the deadly drug Fentanyl.

For many years, I’ve had the honor of working with the Maryland Legislature during my time with Baltimore County and we passed some important laws that did in-fact protect children. This included the toughest drunk driving laws in the country, underage and binge drinking, serving alcohol to minors, parents’ responsibility for minors drinking in their homes, as well as legislation aimed at reducing child abuse and child neglect. Our theme was always:

“CHILDREN & FAMILY FIRST!!

It seems that now, children & families are LAST! When did it become OK to pass legislation that would absolutely hurt children and families, just to raise more funds for education? I can’t tell you how many families I’ve been

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working with because their middle school child is now using marijuana. Yes, it brings in millions of dollars of new State revenue, but it's also hurting children and families. If you legalize online sports gambling, again many underage kids can find their way to sports gambling sites. All of this is increasing the risk of teens and young adults from getting addicted to gambling.

Now you are considering allowing total online gambling to be legal in the State of Maryland. I can already picture high school students playing blackjack and poker during their lunch period. It could and will happen if this legislation is passed.

The question is: HOW FAR WILL YOU GO TO RAISE REVENUE ON THE BACKS OF OUR CHILDREN?"

When you go to a casino, you WILL NOT see any underage youth gambling and that's because casino's have security at all entrances. Where is the security with online gambling? It's not there. And we know that the age validation programs being considered will NOT work. Kids will always find a way to get into these sites.

Please go back to the days when we protected our youth, not use them as pawns to raise revenue for the State.

For these reasons, I strongly urge an UNFAVORABLE COMMITTEE REPORT on HB1319.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Gimbel

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