



February 26, 2024

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary Chair
House Ways & Means Committee

Re: HB1319

Position: Oppose

Chair Atterbeary and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Maryland Tourism Coalition (MTC) and our members, I am writing to express our **OPPOSITION** for HB1319 Internet Gaming - Authorization and Implementation. The Maryland Tourism Coalition is a 5016C, representing all sectors of the Tourism industry across the state including casinos, major retailers and hundreds of small businesses that will be severely impacted by the passing of internet gaming.

The funds from the expansion of online lottery sales and online gaming would certainly benefit the Blue Print of Education Fund but it will also hurt hundreds of businesses and communities that will be impacted from decreased visitation from the brick and mortar locations. For most people, a trip to the casino is much more than dropping your bet. It is an experience! It creates jobs. It brings in revenues to the surrounding businesses.

I am a former employee of Arundel Mills and worked in the Marketing Department. I saw the then *Maryland Live!* Grow from a parking lot to what is now referred to as Live! Casino & Hotel Maryland. I have seen the changing of restaurants and venues to better fit the lifestyle of the casino guests. I saw the retailers in Arundel Mills change to higher end shops to also be a better fit for these guests. If you have a couple where one gambles and the other one doesn't, mostly there is a compromise, and someone is shopping. They will most likely have a meal together. Our Maryland casinos are 21 and over. Dad, sometimes mom, gets to go to the casino while the other takes the kids Back to School Shopping, to Dave & Busters or in the case of Hollywood Casino, they go to Great Wolf Lodge. If iGaming was to pass, these trips, will not happen and any expansion plans for these casinos will come to a quick halt. Construction jobs now lost.

Tourism & Hospitality is a very important part of Maryland's economy. In fact, it is the 10th largest private sector employer, creating 187,296. Maryland casinos support over 27,300 direct and indirect jobs. With the passing of this bill and iGaming, jobs will be lost. It is forecasted that Maryland will lose 2,700 jobs. The same number of jobs have been lost in Pennsylvania since iGaming has launched. Presque Isle Casino in Pennsylvania released 45% of their employees once iGaming passed in the state due to an extreme loss in revenues. NJ has seen 16,000 jobs lost.

Tourism generates \$2.3 billion in state and local taxes. These state and local taxes go back into our communities to build schools, to support our emergency systems, towards our infrastructure and more. Maryland Casinos give back the local communities Video Lottery Terminal (VLT) fund. VLT was created with small business owner in mind, the state's Video Lottery Terminal (VLT) fund uses proceeds from video lottery terminals (slots) to assist small, minority, and women owned businesses located in targeted areas surrounding six Maryland casinos. At least 50% of the VLT allocations will be deployed to small, minority and women-owned businesses located within certain targeted areas of the six casinos. The other 50% will be available to small, minority and women-owned businesses located throughout Maryland. This disbursement will decrease when casino revenues decrease.

When we invest in tourism, we all win. But if iGaming wins, Maryland loses! We urge you to oppose this bill. Please feel free to reach out to me directly with any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ruth Toomey

Ruth Toomey, Executive Director

Maryland Tourism Coalition

ruth@mdtourism.org

Cell: 336-254-2648