



February 21, 2024

The Honorable William C. Ferguson IV
President of the Senate
Maryland State House, H-107
State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
House Speaker
Maryland State House, H-101
State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Opposition to SB0565 and SB0603/HB1319 – Expansion of Commercial Gaming - Internet Gaming Referendum and Internet Gaming - Authorization and Implementation

Dear President Ferguson and Speaker Jones,

The legalization of iGaming in Maryland, which is scheduled for a vote on February 28, poses a serious threat to our state and to your constituents. A vote in support of SB565 and SB603 is a vote against the health of our economy and the health of the people of Maryland. I am writing on behalf of The BWI Business Partnership to request that you vote against this ill-conceived and potentially devastating legislation.

The legalization of online gambling in Maryland could result in several catastrophic economic impacts including a statewide personal income decline of \$65M, a loss of \$1.9M in state income taxes, and a loss of \$1.2M in local income tax each year.

The potential loss of revenue to the casinos can also impact the local communities and non-profits such as our organization and our Foundation (BWI Community Development Foundation) that receive grant funding through the video lottery terminal facility funds (Local Development Council (LDC)/Anne Arundel County). In FY23, our County Connector shuttle grant program serviced over 84,000 passengers by providing free transit to job centers in Anne Arundel County within the 3-mile radius of Live! Casino and Hotel and through our Roadside Beautification grant program, we have collected over 40 tons of litter along with providing landscaping services to the same area making the community more aesthetically pleasing and providing a healthier community for people to work, live and play. In FY24, The Cordish Companies, Live! Casino & Hotel Maryland and the Anne Arundel County Local Development Council (LDC) awarded more than **\$18.8 million** in local impact and community grants to organizations in Anne Arundel County for Fiscal Year 2024 including our Foundation organization. This year's grants bring the total funds generated by Live! Casino & Hotel in support of Anne Arundel County organizations to more than **\$222 million** since Live! Casino & Hotel's opening.

To legalize iGaming without sufficient time to research its potential impacts does a disservice to the people and businesses that support and contribute to Maryland's economy. Beyond this potential harm to our state's finances, legalized online gambling will almost certainly result in a rise in gambling addiction, which puts the wellbeing and livelihood of Marylanders at serious risk.



The Sage Policy Group and Anne Arundel County Chamber of Commerce published a new report further addressing the potential impacts of iGaming, including:

- **Job losses:** There are six brick and mortar casinos in the state which support 27,000 jobs as of 2023, according to the American Gaming Association. iGaming jobs are often held out of state which will cause a decline in locally held jobs and available wages and benefits.
- **Harm to surrounding businesses:** Potential expansion of brick and mortar casinos may halt, which limits possible revenue increases and traffic generation for other nearby businesses which benefit from casino traffic. Surrounding entertainment and shopping clusters, many of which opened because of casino traffic, will lose business as fewer guests travel to brick and mortar locations.
- **Lost opportunities:** Leisure and hospitality are struggling to recover from the pandemic. The loss of casino jobs and vendor opportunities will further harm the success of local businesses.
- **Limited wages:** iGaming could limit job opportunities for Marylanders with only a high school diploma who currently have access to positions like table games dealer which provide living wages and benefits but may disappear if iGaming is legalized.

I am sure you can see now how supporting this legislation is a vote against Maryland and Marylanders. The above risks pose too great a threat to the economy and therefore to the commercial interests we represent. The BWI Business Partnership strongly urges that you oppose this harmful bill.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments and concerns.

Sincerely,

Gina Stewart, Executive Director
BWI Business Partnership