

Testimony offered on behalf of:
Mark Joseph

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.

My name is Mark Joseph. I am a Poker Dealer at Live! Casino.

I am testifying here today because the legislation you are considering on iGaming will impact me personally.

Let me explain:

For twenty years, I was a golf professional. I worked as a golf instructor and helped manage several courses in Maryland and Virginia. I had my PGA Class A Professional Card and, if I may brag, my low score is a 67 and I have had two holes in one!

The long hours, irregular earnings and seasonality of the golfing business became too much for me. In 2018 I left my golfing jobs and applied to be a dealer at Live! Casino and Hotel. I was hired in 2018, and roughly a year later, I transferred to be a Poker Dealer. In my mind, Poker was a better job. It had higher earnings, and you got to sit all day rather than stand.

Today I earn just over \$70,000 a year. My job at Live affords me health benefits, a 401k with a Company match, paid time off, and more. It is a secure, steady job.

Presently, I care for my 86 year old mother. I am her primary caretaker.

When I am not working or golfing, I love to play poker. I play at other casinos and occasionally I play online. I find it relaxing and honestly, I am pretty good at it.

Before joining this industry, I struggled with paying bills and keeping up. My credit score was low and I was living paycheck to paycheck. Now I have a house, a car, my credit has risen considerably and I am in a good place.

But I do have one major concern. As I said before, I started at Live in 2018. Because we have limited turnover in the Poker Room, my seniority is relatively low. What that means is if iGaming is approved, I will be one of the people likely to be laid off.

I will lose everything I have worked for. My job will almost certainly be in jeopardy.

In addition, as an avid poker player, I know how addictive the game can be. I can see people sitting at home, at work, and anywhere in between, playing poker for real money on their phones or computers. I have self control, but I know many others who do not. This easy access to iGaming will become addictive to many. It will hurt families who likely will not know

that losses are mounting up. People will lose their homes and maybe even their jobs.

Today, people have to get in their cars to come to the casino. It is a physical barrier that helps control impulse behavior. Easy access poker, via iGaming, will be a temptation many will not be able to resist. The results will be devastating.

The downsides of iGaming are clear, and real. The upsides of more tax revenues are, at best, unclear. As I see it, the negatives far outweigh any positives.

Thank you for listening.

I encourage you to vote against this Bill.

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