

Testimony of The Cordish Companies and Live! Casino Hotel Maryland

Presented by Mark Stewart, General Counsel

In SUPPORT of SB 706

Budget and Taxation Committee Hearing

February 21, 2025

On behalf of The Cordish Companies and Live! Casino Hotel Maryland, I respectfully submit this written testimony **in support** of SB 706, which calls upon additional forms of gambling authorized by the State (sports betting and fantasy sports) to contribute their share to efforts combatting problem gambling. Even more importantly, SB 706 recognizes the vital need for a comprehensive prevalence study dedicated specifically to mobile gambling in Maryland.

Early in the days of casino gaming in Maryland, the General Assembly showed great foresight in forming the Maryland Alliance for Responsible Gaming (MARG). Through MARG, the House of Delegates, the Senate, the Department of Health, all the State's casinos and other stakeholders have worked collaboratively and consistently to combat problem gambling. Regulations and procedures were put in place to require safeguards against problem and underage gambling at in-person casinos, including prohibitions on gambling with credit cards, prohibitions on gambling while drunk or under the influence, strict ID checking protocols, and more.

Maryland has limited experience with mobile sports betting in terms of duration. Yet, presently, 97% of sports bets in the State are placed online. While the Maryland Center of Excellence has reported that it is already seeing a significant increase in call volumes and problems among young people, the Center has explained that the State does not yet have the data to show, and does not know, the full scope of the problem that may be facing Marylanders.

It takes time for problem gambling behavior to manifest itself, people to accept that they have a problem and, ultimately, to seek help from the Center or a 1-800 Helpline. Indeed, over the past 12-18 months, there has been a growing amount of data and concern over the negative impacts of online gambling, including mobile sports betting:

- A chorus of news agencies have opined or published exposes on online gambling, including The Washington Post, CBS News, The Atlantic, The New Republic, Bloomberg, The Wall Street Journal, 60 Minutes, The Baltimore Sun and more;
- Public health and problem gambling experts, such as Shekhar Saxena, Professor of Global Health at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, have explained that “Online gambling can be 10 times more harmful than other forms of gambling;”¹
- Numerous universities, such as Northwestern University, University of Kansas, BYU, UCLA and more, have issued reports detailing the negative financial impacts of online gambling.² These studies found that the negative impacts of online gambling are especially harmful to low-income gamblers and vulnerable households; and
- The National Problem Gambling Council reports a 30% increase in the risk of gambling addiction that coincides with the expansion of online gambling over the past three years.³

Given this, SB 706 rightly calls for a comprehensive mobile gambling prevalence study based upon multiple years’ worth of data to be completed by July 1, 2030. We support public policy being based on strong data analysis and urge the Committee to favorably report out SB 706. Thank you.

¹ *Deseret News*, “Online gambling: the stakes for public health” (Jan. 24, 2025).

² *Gambling Away Stability: Sports Betting’s Impact on Vulnerable Households*, Scott R. Baker, Justin Balthrop, Mark Johnson, Jason Krotter, Kevin Pisciotta (June 30, 2024); *Online Gambling Policy Effects on Tax Revenue and Irresponsible Gaming*, Wayne J. Taylor, Daniel M. McCarthy, Kenneth C. Wilbur (June 6, 2024); *How gambling affects the brain and who is most vulnerable to addiction*, Emily Sohn (July 2023); *The Financial Consequences of Legalized Sports Gambling*, Brett Hollenbeck, Poet Larsen, Daivde Proserpio (July 23, 2024).

³ *See supra* n. 1.