



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 6, 2025

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
130 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: House Bill (HB) 510 - Frederick County - Gaming - Acceptance of Credit as Payment - Letter of Information

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of information for House Bill 510 - Frederick County - Gaming - Acceptance of Credit as Payment, which authorizes certain fire, rescue, and ambulance organizations in Frederick County to accept credit as payment for gaming devices at their fundraising events. While MDH acknowledges the intent to support emergency services through expanded fundraising opportunities, we wish to provide information on the potential public health concerns associated with problem gambling, particularly regarding debt accumulation and financial distress.

Problem gambling is a recognized public health issue that can have severe financial and psychological consequences for individuals and families. The accessibility of credit in gaming environments has been linked to higher spending beyond a player's immediate financial capacity, often leading to substantial personal debt burdens and financial insecurity. Research indicates that individuals who gamble with credit frequently experience financial strain that affects their household stability, with potential outcomes including foreclosure, inability to afford essential expenses, and increased reliance on social services.¹ Furthermore, gambling-related debt has been associated with heightened stress, depression, and substance use disorders, further compounding mental health challenges.² Vulnerable populations, including low-income households and young adults, may be disproportionately affected by expanded access to credit for gambling, increasing their risk of financial distress and long-term economic instability.³

MDH recommends that any expansion of credit acceptance for gaming include safeguards to mitigate the risk of problem gambling. Potential measures could include setting transaction limits, requiring informed consent regarding the risks of gambling-related debt, and promoting access to gambling addiction resources.

¹ Mazar, N., Williams, R. J., & Stanovich, K. E. (2021). "The Role of Credit in Gambling Behavior." *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*.

² Blaszczynski, A., & Nower, L. (2002). "A Pathways Model of Problem and Pathological Gambling." *Addiction*.

³ Welte, J. W., Barnes, G. M., Tidwell, M. C., & Hoffman, J. H. (2011). "Gambling and Problem Gambling Across the Lifespan." *Journal of Gambling Studies*.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Laura Herrera Scott", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary