

JACK BAILEY
Legislative District 29
Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Budget & Taxation Committee



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Senate Bill 357 - St. Mary's County - Gaming by Qualified Organization - License Required

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to introduce Senate Bill 357. This bill would add St. Mary's County to the list of counties that issue a gaming license to qualified charitable organizations.

Last year, I was contacted by members of one of our Moose lodges in St. Mary's County that they had been visited by representatives of the Maryland Lottery and Gaming Control Agency (MLGCA) as they conducted inspections of lottery retailers. During that visit, MLGCA found that the lodge was also using electronic gaming devices as they had been for the previous 30 years. While the State has limited the use of such devices in ensuing years, the General Assembly has always taken care not to stop those qualified organizations who were already using them for charitable causes. The Moose Lodge was informed that the use of these devices jeopardized their ability to continue as a lottery retailer.

After reviewing State law and consulting with St. Mary's County on this matter, I contacted MLGCA to request information on why they had taken this action. I was informed, effectively, that MLGCA could not certify that the devices were being used in accordance with the applicable laws because they were not licensed in any way. Most other jurisdictions, including Calvert County and Charles County, which neighbor St. Mary's County, require a qualified organization to receive a gaming license from the County before operating.

While I am reluctant to see a new license be required, particularly for charitable organizations, I also understand the need to ensure that any gaming conducted in Maryland is occurring in accordance with the law. I am concerned that without the ability to obtain a license, what happened to this Moose Lodge could happen to similar organizations in my district, and their important work on behalf of our community could be stopped. Therefore, I have worked with MLGCA to introduce this bill creating this license in St. Mary's County to protect the ability of these organizations to raise money through gaming as permitted under the law. It is modeled after St. Mary's County's existing bingo license with one key difference. This legislation does not include a provision allowing the County to charge a fee for this license, as I do not believe we should be charging these charitable organizations for their continued service to our community.

I would like to thank MLGCA for their assistance in drafting this language and their attention to this matter. I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 357. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Bailey'.

Senator Jack Bailey