



March 11, 2026

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB 884 – Internet Poker Authorization and Regulation Act of 2026

Dear Chair Guzzone:

This letter is in strong opposition to *SB 884 – Internet Poker Authorization and Regulation Act of 2026*. This bill defines poker as a skill-based game and authorizes the State Lottery and Gaming Control Commission to license and regulate internet skill-based gaming operators. By defining poker as a skill-based game instead of gambling, this bill circumvents the voter referendum required by the Maryland Constitution.

Internet poker is gambling as it involves betting with real money and assets on an outcome that requires luck. There is skill involved, but gambling with skill is still gambling. Not only is internet poker gambling, but it is an addictive form of gambling. A literature review of online poker players found that the proportion of problematic gamblers was higher than in other forms of gambling.¹ Several factors predicting excessive gambling were identified such as stress, dissociation, boredom, negative emotions, irrational beliefs, anxiety, and impulsivity.

In France, internet poker has been legal since 2010. It ranks second in online gambling usage behind the lottery. The proportion of poker gamblers with problematic use also appears high in France. In the Excessive Gambling Reference Center, one patient in five is a poker gambler, with 75% being online poker gamblers.² Furthermore, 22.1% of online poker gamblers have a problematic use with 14.1% being severe problem gamblers and 8.0% moderate problem gamblers.³

Internet poker carries all the same risks as any other form of internet gambling. This includes negative consequences on physical and mental health, relationships, work and educational performance, and financial difficulties.⁴ In addition to the harm caused to individuals, online

¹ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5387767/>

² <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0165178117314166>

³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0165178117314166>

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https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/41261/1/Pompidou_IT_2024_Risks_and_harms_online_gaming_and_gambling.pdf



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gambling and gaming problems can be linked to significant economic and societal costs corresponding to a considerable burden of disease in both cases.

We urge an unfavorable report. If you would like more information, please contact Heather Eshleman at heshleman@som.umaryland.edu or (667) 214-2120.

Sincerely,

Heather Eshleman

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