

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Eric Eitel, and I respectfully urge you to vote **no on HB 1343**.

My concerns fall into two main areas: Economic impact, and consumer protection.

First, Economic Impact.

According to an independent study by The Innovation Group that compared states that have already adopted iGaming with those considering it; introducing iGaming in Maryland would harm employees and the broader economy in ways that an employee displacement fund would do little to fix.

The Innovation Group projects a net tax benefit of \$19 million by 2029 once the market matures. I would argue that \$19 million is not worth the long-term loss of stable jobs, reduced local income, and the broader economic consequences of job displacement. Also, I have to question how much difference that projected net income would make compared to the money that is currently being directed towards The Blueprint for Maryland's Future fund.

At MGM National Harbor alone, there are 1,056 table games and poker dealers. Of those, 728 — nearly 70 percent — are Maryland residents. These are real people supporting families. For many of us, this is one of the few entry level positions that pays close to a livable wage.

The study inferred that for every two dealers lost due to the negative impacts on brick-and-mortar casinos, one additional non-gaming employee loses their job. The ripple effect goes well beyond the casino floor.

Second, consumer and youth protections.

Maryland casinos have strict ID checks and in-person safeguards. Dealers are trained under Maryland law to monitor intoxication, flag illicit behavior, and recognize signs of problem gambling so that we can direct guests to appropriate resources. We are often the first line of defense.

Online gaming removes many of those protections. Even with safeguards written into the bill, it is far easier for a minor to access an account online — whether by using a parent's ID or having one created for them.

The Innovation Group reported that 26.4% of adolescents who gamble develop gambling disorders. I have personally witnessed individuals go from never gambling to becoming problem gamblers before my eyes. Removing in-person oversight increases that risk.

In closing, this issue is not just about revenue. It is about Maryland jobs, Maryland families, and protecting vulnerable residents.

For those reasons, I respectfully ask you to vote **no on HB 1343**.

Thank you for your time.