

Opposition Testimony

HB1255 Expansion of Commercial Gaming – Internet Gaming Referendum

Before the Ways and Means Committee of the Maryland House of Delegates

March 5, 2026

Presented by

Tracy Lingo, President, UNITE HERE Local 7

Thank you, Chairwoman Wilkins for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Tracy Lingo, and I am the president of UNITE HERE Local 7, the casino, hotel, food service, and hospitality workers union in Maryland. UNITE HERE is the largest union of casino workers in the US, representing over 100,000 members who work in casinos in Las Vegas, Atlantic City, and throughout the country. Local 7 proudly represents workers at the Horseshoe Casino in Baltimore and the Ocean Downs Casino in Worcester County. Our sister local, UNITE HERE Local 25, represents workers at the MGM National Harbor in Prince George's County.

I am here today to strongly oppose the legalization of iGaming and to share our union's direct experience with job loss in iGaming states.

Over the past six years in New Jersey, internet gaming revenue skyrocketed from under \$500 million to over \$2.9 billion annually – a 503% increase. Over the same period, **the number of jobs in Atlantic City casinos fell by 20%**, according to reports from the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement.

In Michigan, our union has seen an even more dramatic loss in casino jobs. In 2019, our union had 2,796 members working in hotel and food and beverage jobs at all three downtown Detroit casinos. In 2021, Michigan launched iGaming. By late 2025, we had 1,767 members at the same casinos, **a loss of 1,029 casino jobs represented by UNITE HERE in Detroit, a 37% decline**. Less than five years after implementation of iGaming, Detroit casinos now make more revenue from casino games online than in-person – a rapid and radical change in the industry.

Our members work in hotel and food and beverage jobs in casinos. They are housekeepers, servers, bartenders, cooks, and dishwashers. These positions make up most of the union jobs in the industry and are completely dependent on in-person customers. When Maryland voters approved casino legalization in a statewide referendum, we voted in favor based on the promise that the industry would create good jobs. Legalizing internet gaming will put these jobs at risk. Our members could face lost hours, lost tips, and layoffs.

Our union is fighting to create good jobs in the hospitality industry. The reality in non-union hospitality sector jobs throughout Maryland is that workers face poverty wages and struggle to get by. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the Accommodation

and Food Services sector, only 38% of workers have access to employer-sponsored health care benefits, only 1% of workers have a defined-benefit pension plan, and only 3% of workers have a union. Good, union jobs with high wages, affordable health insurance, and retirement benefits are not easily replaced. Our members have organized, marched, and bargained for years in the gaming industry to improve their jobs and to uplift their families and their communities. Just this year, many of you have heard testimony from our members at Ocean Downs who are currently calling on Churchill Downs to keep its promise of family supporting jobs to the Maryland public. We cannot put their progress at risk.

To be clear, we oppose both the referendum bills, HB 1255 and SB 0761, as well as the authorization and implementation bills, HB 1343 and SB 0885.

Please stand with casino workers and their families. Thank you.