



Chairwoman Jheanelle Wilkins
H-101 State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401
Cc: Honorable Members, House of Delegates

Ways and Means Committee Hearing

March 3, 2026

Chair Wilkins and Honorable Members -

Testimony in Favor of HB1409 Gaming - Problem Gambling - Prevalence Study and Fund Revenue

I appreciate this opportunity for the Campaign for Fairer Gambling to lend our support of **HB1409**. My name is Brianne Doura-Schawohl, and I am an international problem gambling expert and director of the Campaign for Fairer Gambling. The Campaign aims to advance a politically bipartisan, scientifically evidence-based practices to enhance consumer protections across the gambling sector. We strive to raise awareness of gambling-related harm, ultimately doing all that we can to prevent and reduce it.

The Campaign fully supports HB1409, a measure that will take tangible action to address gambling-related harms in Maryland by funding a comprehensive, state-specific problem gambling prevalence study and ensuring that revenue from gaming is allocated to prevention and treatment programs. Sound policy can only be achieved with relevant and recent data.

A 2024 survey found that gambling is very common in Maryland: 9 out of 10 adults have gambled at least once in their lifetime. More concerning, the number of adults with disordered gambling is rising, from 4.0% in 2022 to 5.7% in 2024.

Some groups are at higher risk:

- **By gender:** Men are more than twice as likely as women to experience disordered gambling (8.9% vs. 3.3%).
- **By race and ethnicity:** Black adults have the highest rate at 10.4%, followed by Hispanic adults at 8.8%, White adults at 3.6%, and Asian adults at 1.9%. Among those with disordered gambling, 52% are Black, 36% are White, and 2% are Asian.
- **By age:** The highest rates are among adults 56–64 years (7.7%) and young adults 18–24 years (6.9%). Rates are lowest among adults 75 and older (3.2%).

This data makes it clear that gambling-related harm is not evenly distributed—some groups are much more vulnerable than others, underscoring the need for targeted, evidence-based prevention and treatment.

Additional reports from the state have shown concerning trends, including alarming rates of harm happening within the sports betting consumer cohorts, and the underage demographic.

You will hear a lot this session about the risks posed by gambling, particularly from unregulated and highly addictive forms of play. HB1409 provides Maryland with the data and tools necessary to understand the scope of problem gambling within the state and what would be necessary to address these issues. Accurate, local prevalence data is essential to developing effective, targeted interventions and problem gambling policies.

Research shows that certain forms of gambling, including online products, are significantly more addictive than traditional games. Without rigorous state-specific data, policymakers cannot properly respond to these risks or ensure that prevention and treatment resources are scaled appropriately.

By passing HB1409, Maryland would join other states that have invested in prevalence studies to inform evidence-based strategies for prevention and treatment. These studies have been crucial in shaping policies that protect vulnerable populations and communities from gambling-related harm.

Allocating revenue from gaming to fund these programs ensures that the state has sustainable resources to prevent, identify, and treat problem gambling. This is a proactive approach that addresses gambling-related harm before it escalates, rather than responding only after the damage has occurred.

HB1409 is a data-driven, public-health-centered approach that empowers Maryland to protect its residents and communities from gambling-related harm while ensuring responsible oversight of gaming activities.

We appreciate your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Brianne Doura-Schawohl