



## MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

*Affiliated with the National AFL-CIO*

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### **HB 1343 - Internet Gaming - Authorization and Implementation** **House Ways and Means Committee** **March 5, 2026**

#### **OPPOSE**

**Donna S. Edwards**  
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Madame Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong opposition to HB 1343. On behalf of our 700 affiliated unions, I offer the following comments.

Currently, the following unions represent thousands of workers in six Maryland casinos: UNITEHERE, Seafarers International Union (SIU), International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE), United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), United Auto Workers (UAW), International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the Teamsters (IBT). These workers—table game dealers, slot attendants, bussers, wait staff, bartenders, maintenance, cleaners, and cooks—drive an industry built on in-person hospitality, gaming operations, food service, and security, and are all jobs that cannot be replaced by online platforms.

Proponents of HB 1343 will claim that there will be millions of dollars in new revenue and increased jobs, but data contradicts this claim. Labor's experience in states that have iGaming is different from what the proponents assert. According to a 2025 Innovation group report, when online casino gambling is introduced, land-based casino revenue drops by an average of 16%<sup>1</sup>, and that directly translates into job loss. Maryland's casinos employ thousands of workers whose livelihoods depend on in-person operations, and HB 1343 puts those jobs at significant risk.

That same report further underscored the economic harms, finding that Maryland's brick and mortar casinos could lose over \$340 million in gaming revenue if iGaming is introduced. This is compounded by an additional \$35 million in lost food and beverage revenue and nearly \$8 million in lost hotel revenue. This is a significant hit to the hospitality and tourism sectors that rely on in-person casino traffic.<sup>2</sup> Focusing on online gaming as a new potential state revenue source shifts the attention away from Maryland's structural revenue problems that require real solutions like combined reporting, changing the throwback rule, and increasing income taxes on millionaires.

<sup>1</sup> "Economic Impacts of iGaming Expansion." The Innovation Group. February 2025.

<sup>2</sup> "Economic Impacts of iGaming Expansion." The Innovation Group. February 2025.





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The report also concluded that Maryland could lose thousands of brick and mortar jobs, resulting in a loss of \$98 million to \$121 million in labor income which is money that could go back into our state's economy. iGaming shifts activity away from in-person operations toward automated online platforms that require only a fraction of the workforce. Every dollar spent online is a dollar not spent in a casino where workers staff restaurants, clean hotel rooms, run table games, maintain equipment, and support the venues. In contrast, iGaming would only create 47 new positions (per the Innovation Group). This is job displacement at scale. Maryland would be trading thousands of middle-class, family-sustaining jobs for a handful of tech-oriented positions.

The financial harm to players themselves is well-documented. A study done by the University of California San Diego's Rady School of Management examined more than 700,000 online gamblers and found that "96% appeared to lose money to online gambling" while "only 4% made money from online gambling."<sup>3</sup> This is due to the design of the platforms using algorithms, and constant access to maximize losses and keep players engaged. This is millions of dollars lost by wage earners, not going into local economies.

Online gaming will contribute to more problem gambling. Many of the states that have legalized online gambling have seen a significant increase in the number of calls made to their respective problem gambling hotlines. Calls to the National Council on Problem Gambling's helpline grew by 150% over five years, increasing from 32,666 in 2019 to 83,660 in 2023.<sup>4</sup> This is a testament to the rise of online betting and the ease at which individuals can develop problem habits. This finding is hardly unique; a 2023 article by Dr. Tristian Brass and Dr. Shawn R. Charlton of the University of Central Arkansas found that, "The easy access and always-on nature of online gambling could encourage compulsive behavior...bettors can easily conceal their gambling activity from others, making it easier for individuals to engage in excessive gambling behavior."<sup>5</sup>

These problems are not just limited to adults who can legally participate in online gaming but are especially concerning for young people, primarily young men. Today, 90% of bets are placed on phones, meaning gambling is no longer an occasional activity; it is a constant impulse. Young men are 3.4 times more likely to engage in problematic gambling, and the most vulnerable years are ages 16-22, when the brain is still developing impulse control. A 2026 Common Sense Media report found that 36% of adolescent boys ages 11-17 reported gambling in the past year. These

<sup>3</sup> Christine Clark (University of California San Diego), "Legalized Gambling Increases Irresponsible Betting Behavior, Especially Among Low-Income Populations." July 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Wayne J. Taylor, Daniel M. McCarthy, Kenneth C. Wilbur, "Online Gambling Policy Effects on Tax Revenue and Irresponsible Gambling." June 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Tristan Brass and Shawn R. Charlton, PhD (University of Central Arkansas), "The (Unfortunate) Rise of Online Gambling." PSI CHI. April 2023.





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children are carrying betting platforms in their pockets 24/7.<sup>6</sup> We cannot risk the long-term negative effects that online gambling has on young people.

As brick-and-mortar casinos lose revenue to online gaming, it will decrease important funding for problem gaming. Online gaming may raise additional funds set aside in the bill for problem gaming but not nearly enough to combat the increase in the problem it is helping to cause in the first place. CNN reported that, “Resources for gambling addiction programs have long been thin in the United States and have been stretched further by the current wave of sports betting.”<sup>7</sup> A 2024 gambling addiction study found that up to 20 million Americans have gambling problems or are at risk of developing one.<sup>8</sup>

Maryland should not take a risky bet on internet gaming. The potential job losses, unstable revenue, and damage to public health are not worth the risk.

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report on HB 1343.

<sup>6</sup> “The Hidden Epidemic: Online Gambling Among Teens and Young Adults.” Prairie Care. February 2026.

<sup>7</sup> Nathaniel Meyersohn. “The dark side of the sports betting boom.” CNN. February 10, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Anders Bergman, “Gambling Addiction Study – 3300 Participants.” QuitGamble. January 2024.

