



Ocean City, Maryland Chamber of Commerce

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TESTIMONY OFFERED ON BEHALF OF THE GREATER OCEAN CITY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

IN OPPOSITION TO: HB1255 – Expansion of Commercial Gaming – Internet Gaming Referendum

Before:
House Ways and Means Committee
Hearing: 3/5/2026 at 1:00 PM

The Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, representing over 770 regional businesses and job creators, **OPPOSES** House Bill HB1255 – **Expansion of Commercial Gaming - Internet Gaming Referendum.**

HB 1255 provides that the General Assembly may authorize, by law, the State Lottery and Gaming Control Commission to issue certain Internet gaming licenses; requiring certain implementation legislation to include certain criteria and specifications, subject to a certain limitation; declaring the intent of the General Assembly that certain revenues be used for dedicated purposes including the funding of public education; and submitting the Act to a referendum of the qualified voters of the State.

The Chamber supports in-person legal gaming because it is highly regulated and prioritizes the safety and well-being of communities. Unlike online gaming, in-person gaming provides effective safeguards to prevent underage gambling, limit excessive access, and address problem gambling through established support programs. Additionally, in-person gaming drives local economic growth by generating stable jobs and reinvesting revenues into schools, infrastructure, and public services.

The rapid expansion of iGaming has created a pressing need for action. To legalize iGaming does a disservice to the people and businesses that support and contribute to Maryland's economy. Beyond this potential harm to our state's finances, legalized online gambling will almost certainly result in a rise in

gambling addiction, which puts the wellbeing and livelihood of Marylanders at serious risk. iGaming threatens our economy, our health, displaces jobs and weakens oversight of responsible practices

The Sage Policy Group and Anne Arundel County Chamber of Commerce published a report further addressing the potential impacts of iGaming, including:

- **Job Losses:** There are six brick-and-mortar casinos in the State which support 27,000 jobs, one of which is here in Ocean City. iGaming jobs are often held out of state which will cause a decline in locally held jobs and available wages and benefits.
- **Harm to Nearby Businesses:** Potential expansion of brick-and-mortar casinos may halt, which limits possible revenue increases and traffic generation for other nearby businesses which benefit from casino traffic. Surrounding entertainment and shopping clusters, many of which opened because of casino traffic, will lose business as fewer guests travel to brick-and-mortar locations.
- **Lost Opportunities:** The loss of casino jobs and vendor opportunities will further harm the success of local businesses.
- **Limited Wages:** iGaming could limit job opportunities for Marylanders with only a high school diploma who currently have access to positions like table games dealer which provide living wages and benefits but may disappear if iGaming is legalized.

For the above reasons, including the economic, operational, and health-related reasons, the Ocean City Chamber respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE REPORT for HB1255**. Please feel free to contact the Chamber directly at 410-213-0144, or Dennis F. Rasmussen, dfr@rasmussengrp.net at 410-821-4445 should you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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