



MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.

RE: HB 518 SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

Gaming - Problem Gambling and College Athlete Protections

House Ways and Means Committee Hearing: February 12, 2026

The Maryland/DC Chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (MDDCSAM) supports HB518 **with one amendment (see the second bullet point).**

HB518 enacts four sound public health measures that minimize the expected harms from gambling.:

- HB518 improves the current voluntary exclusion program by allowing the Maryland Lottery and Gaming Control Commission to automatically provide contact information to the Maryland Center for Excellence on Problem Gambling of individuals who request placement on the voluntary exclusion list. Currently, a person who signs up for the state's Voluntary Exclusion Program must proactively request a call from the Center. This change allows the Center to reach out to the individual to offer help from a Peer Recovery Support Specialist. Such peer support is an effective, evidence-based practice that increases the chances of successfully dealing with problem gambling. Contacted individuals always retain the right to decline further contact.
- HB518 raises the age to participate in fantasy sports from 18 to 21, but **exempts 18-20-year-olds with an existing fantasy competition account.** Fantasy sports are highly addictive because "the reward structure of games is carefully designed to trigger a continuous cycle of achievement and reinforcement" just like many other forms of gambling. **1** There is no public health justification for allowing 18-20-year-olds to engage in this type of online gambling when they are not allowed to enter a casino. Early exposure to gambling is associated with a higher likelihood of gambling problems later in life. **2** At least 5 other states already ban fantasy sports gambling by those under 21 years of age. There is also no public health basis for exempting 18-20-year-olds just because they already hold an existing fantasy competition account.

MDDCSAM supports an amendment to eliminate this exemption.

- HB518 prohibits so-called "proposition bets" on collegiate sports events, i.e., wagering on aspects of a sporting event that are not directly connected with the final score or outcome. Proposition bets include wagering on an individual athlete's performance during the sporting event. Proposition betting contributes to harassment of college athletes **3** and is opposed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). **4** The Maryland Lottery and Gaming Control Commission issued guidance against collegiate sports proposition betting in 2024, **5** but a guidance has no enforcement mechanism.

- HB518 requires all sports wagering licensees to annually provide all transactional data on wagering (excluding personal data) to Morgan State University, Bowie State University, and the University of Maryland School of Medicine for the purposes of research on sports gambling. Such research will help develop more effective, evidence-based public health measures to minimize the harms of sports wagering.

For these reasons, MDDCSAM respectfully urges a favorable report on HB518 with our proposed amendment.

Sincerely,

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REFERENCES:

1. Exploring the Addictive Nature of Fantasy Games Beyond Skill Mastery, <https://www.psychiatrist.com/pcc/exploring-addictive-nature-fantasy-games-beyond-skill-mastery/>.
2. Perez L. Too Young to Gamble: Long-term Risks from Underage Gambling. *Journal of Gambling Studies* (2024) 40:1575–1584.
3. SIGNIFY GROUP: BETTER DATA, ONLINE ABUSE IN NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS: NCAA PILOT STUDY 2023–24, NCAA, <https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/ncaa/wagering/NCAAThreatMatrixPilotStudyPublicReport.pdf>.
4. David Ubben, NCAA president Charlie Baker wants ban on prop bets in college sports, *The Athletic* (Mar. 27, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5372615/2024/03/27/ncaa-president-charlie-baker-prop-betting/>.
5. Jeff Barker, State told sportsbooks to stop offering bets on individual players, *THE BALTIMORE SUN*, (Mar. 26, 2024).