



March 5, 2026

House Ways and Means Committee
130 Taylor House Office Building
131 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB 1409 – Gaming - Problem Gambling - Prevalence Study and Fund
Revenue – Support

Dear Chair Wilkins:

This letter is in strong support of *HB 1409 – Gaming - Problem Gambling - Prevalence Study and Fund Revenue*. This bill requires the Maryland Department of Health to conduct prevalence studies concerning problem and pathological gambling and distributes a portion of proceeds from fantasy competitions and sports wagering to the Problem Gambling Fund.

The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling (the Center) is fully funded by the Problem Gambling Fund (PGF) to promote healthy and informed choices regarding gambling and problem gambling through public awareness, training and education, prevention, technical assistance to the behavioral health care system, peer recovery support, research, and public policy. The Center, which began operation on July 1, 2012, was created in response to legislation in 2008 that expanded legal gambling opportunities in the State. In recognition that problem gambling is an addiction just like substance use disorder, and access to 24/7 casino gambling will inevitably cause a subset of Marylanders to suffer from this addiction, the PGF was established to provide support for problem gambling treatment, prevention, public awareness, helpline services, and research.

The money the Center receives from the funding streams this bill creates will go towards activities such as:

- More robust counter-marketing campaigns to combat the billions of dollars the industry spends on advertising each year.
- More support for the more than 700 people across the state looking for help at any given time.
- Increased training opportunities to bring more providers into Maryland's no-cost treatment network.
- Public awareness campaigns to targeted special populations such as veterans, especially those with PTSD who experience a 60% higher rate of gambling addiction than the general population.ⁱ



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In creating the PGF in 2008, the General Assembly has already recognized that dedicated problem gambling funding is necessary when increasing gambling access. The Center now comes to you to continue this trend by providing meaningful funding for the full portfolio of legalized gambling in the state so that all of the programs funded by the PGF can continue to meet the expanding needs of Marylanders. The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling urges a favorable report on HB 1409. If you would like more information, please contact Heather Eshleman at heshleman@som.umaryland.edu or (667) 214-2120.

Sincerely,

Heather Eshleman

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¹ <https://www.kpbs.org/news/military/2020/02/25/va-doubles-down-treatment-gambling-addiction>