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House Ways and Means Committee

March 5, 2026

House Bill 1409 – *Gaming – Problem Gambling – Prevalence Study and Fund Revenue*

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports** House Bill 1409.

Problem and pathological gambling are increasing concerns nationwide, driven in part by the rapid expansion of sports wagering and the widespread availability of internet and mobile gambling platforms. A recent meta-analysis found that the global prevalence of problem gambling is rising, with particularly strong growth associated with online gambling (Tran et al., 2024). Greater ease of access, continuous play, and aggressive marketing have contributed to higher rates of gambling participation and increased risk of problematic behaviors, particularly among young adults. Problem gambling is not an isolated issue. Among adolescents and young adults, gambling problems have been linked to higher rates of substance use, including binge drinking, compounding health risks, and long-term consequences. Recent peer-reviewed research has demonstrated significant associations between online sports gambling and binge drinking among young men (Dasgupta, 2025), as well as between problem sports gambling and mental health problems in young adults (Shaygan et al., 2024). The increasing prevalence of sports and mobile gambling, combined with these well-documented harms, underscores the urgency to address the consequences associated with gambling.

House Bill 1409 advances Maryland’s public health response to the harmful impacts of gambling. A recent commentary in JAMA Health Forum has further described online sports gambling as an emerging public health problem requiring policy attention (Eisenberg et al., 2026). Problem and pathological gambling contribute to mental health issues, financial instability, and increased demand for clinical and social support services. Requiring the Maryland Department of Health to conduct rigorous prevalence studies on mobile gambling will provide data to understand how widespread gambling problems are and how they may be changing with the rise of digital platforms. This data is critical to informing effective prevention, treatment, and education efforts.

In addition, House Bill 1409 supports the Problem Gambling Fund by ensuring that a portion of fantasy competition and sports wagering revenues are directed toward this fund and by requiring an annual report to the General Assembly on how funds have been expended on treatment and prevention programs. This transparency and dedicated funding will help support expanded

services for individuals struggling with gambling addiction and help communities respond proactively to the expansive avenues, both digital and in-person, to gambling.

Gambling addiction is a public health issue that requires a comprehensive response. By prioritizing data collection and funding for treatment and prevention, House Bill 1409 will help the State better serve individuals and families affected by problem gambling. The studies referenced in this letter will be provided to the committee upon request. For these reasons, MedChi respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 1409.

For more information call:

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