

February 23, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce and our membership of small businesses, employers, and regional stakeholders, I write to express our opposition to Senate Bill 639, which would expand Historic Horse Racing (HHR) machines to sports wagering licensees and off-track betting (OTB) facilities.

Our concern is rooted in the direct economic impact this legislation could have on Rocky Gap Casino Resort, a cornerstone of Western Maryland's tourism and hospitality economy, a valued Chamber member, and one of the region's largest private employers.

While proponents position HHR machines as distinct from traditional slot machines, their operational function, user experience, and market impact closely mirror slot gaming. Expanding these machines into additional venues effectively creates decentralized, "micro-casino" environments without the voter referendum, community input, and regulatory framework that accompanied the establishment of Maryland's brick-and-mortar casinos.

Rocky Gap Casino Resort attracts visitors who support not only the property, but also retailers, and outdoor recreation assets. Introducing HHR machines into new regional locations risks fragmenting that visitor base rather than growing it, reducing overnight stays and ancillary spending that our rural economy depends upon.

As a major employer in Allegany County, Rocky Gap provides family-sustaining jobs with benefits. Revenue erosion caused by market oversaturation could impact workforce stability in a region already facing economic headwinds.

Maryland voters have historically weighed in on gaming expansion. Authorizing slot-like gaming devices in new settings without referendum circumvents that precedent and raises fairness concerns among existing license holders who invested under a different regulatory understanding.

Western Maryland operates within a multi-state tourism and gaming market. Policy changes that dilute established destinations weaken our ability to compete with neighboring states for visitors and tourism dollars.

Our Chamber supports thoughtful economic development and recognizes the role gaming plays in Maryland's broader revenue portfolio. However, expansion that redistributes existing revenue rather than generating new economic growth is counterproductive for rural regions like ours.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report on SB639.

We appreciate your consideration of the regional economic implications of this legislation and welcome continued dialogue on policies that foster sustainable growth for all Maryland communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juli McCoy", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Juli McCoy

President & CEO

juli@alleganycountychamber.com

cc: Allegany County Delegation