

Rob O'Connor, Vice President of Government & Industry Affairs, BetMGM
Testimony in support of Bill 25-0753 "Sports Wagering Amendment Act of 2024"
before the Committee on Business & Economic Development Public Hearing
May 6, 2024

Chairperson McDuffie, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on the topic of sports wagering here in the District of Columbia.

My name is Rob O'Connor and I am the Vice President of Government & Industry Affairs for BetMGM, a joint venture between MGM Resorts International and the London based gaming company, Entain. I have been a resident of the District for over 30 years and I am here today in support of Chairman McDuffie's Sports Wagering Amendment Act of 2024.

Since Online Sports Betting was approved in the District, our company has had the privilege of operating the BetMGM Sportsbook located at Nationals Park in Navy Yard. We employ approximately 30 D.C. residents, and since entering the market in 2019, we have been members of the Capital Riverfront BID. Additionally, our employees have participated in the annual Turkeypalooza with our Nationals partners distributing over 900 turkey meals and 900 winter hats and gloves before Thanksgiving, and we participate in other District community events including the annual Cherry Blossom Festival and D.C. Pride.

While we continue to value our retail sportsbook, we can't stress enough the importance of adding a districtwide mobile component to Class A licenses as provided for in the proposed legislation. In addition to the direct benefits of offering a districtwide mobile product accessible to adults within the D.C. border, a mobile product will bolster our existing retail operations because it increases our ability to connect with consumers when they aren't in or around the ballpark. Especially in light of the Office of Lottery and Gaming's new subcontract that adds refreshed competition to our retail operations, the need for a mobile license extension is greater than ever before. This model has been successful in markets around the country and I am confident that D.C. will experience an increase in tax revenue, growth to Class A retail verticals and increased opportunities for our CBE partners. Additionally, we urge the Council to ensure there is a provision in the bill that allows existing Class A mobile licenses to launch as quickly as possible, through a temporary mobile license or as an extension of our retail license. This type of capability has been commonly used in several new jurisdictions across the U.S. and will be a critical feature for our platform.

In addition to extending mobile sports betting to Class A licensees, we want to voice our support for the bill's overall framework that would allow several mobile sportsbook platforms to enter the mobile market on a level playing field. Sports betting markets around the country have experienced success generating meaningful tax revenue for critical state programs by structuring a market where several mobile sportsbooks can offer their product statewide without geofencing restrictions. This type of framework recognizes two fundamental consumer dynamics: (1) people are increasingly seeking out entertainment through digital means, and (2) they like to have options to compare products, betting odds, and ultimately use what they believe to be the best platform for their interests.

You don't need to look far to see the revenue success of competitive mobile sports betting relative to D.C.'s market performance. Neighboring states Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia have each had competitive retail and mobile sports betting markets for several years and have experienced significant year-over-year growth in tax revenue.

I want to close my comments with an important recognition of BetMGM's commitment to "Responsible Gaming" practices and the investment we make to both prevent and treat instances of problem gaming. Responsible gaming is entirely absent in the thriving illegal, offshore market that still exists today in D.C. Knowing the other operators in this room, I can assure you the industry representatives here are not only committed to replenishing D.C.'s problem gaming fund, but will foster a market that engages safely with consumers.

With that, I want to again thank Chairman McDuffie for championing this effort and urge the Council to support this bill. Thank you for your time.