

Chairman Hickman, Chairwoman Supica, and respected members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee. My name is Jonathan Williams and I am here today on behalf of the Oxford Hills Chamber of Commerce to testify in opposition to LD's 1777, 1944, and 1992, all bills that would expand the Maine gaming market without a data-driven justification for doing so.

The people of Oxford County worked tirelessly for years to achieve approval from the Legislature, the host town of Oxford, the host County of Oxford, and then the people of the State of Maine via a statewide referendum in order to have the right to even apply for a casino license. To allow the tribes, or any group, to circumvent this process for an expansion of gaming is not right, and does not respect the relationship that Oxford Casino has had with the State of Maine, generating millions of dollars for the following interests, among others:

- K-12 Education
- Penobscot and Passamaquoddy Tribes
- University of Maine System
- Maine Community College System
- Maine Maritime Academy
- Maine Harness Racing Interests

Since Oxford Casino opened, New England has seen major casinos open in Plainville, Everett, and Springfield, and Massachusetts-competition is increasing all the time. Additionally, we have no idea what impact mobile sports wagering might have on Maine's two casinos, as this program was just rolled out in September. In LD 1777, the allowance for a casino on every cell phone is particularly troublesome, as this plan would threaten jobs in Oxford and Penobscot County while creating no new jobs in Maine.

Casino gaming in Maine was established as a partnership with the state. The casino pays a 46 percent tax rate on net slot revenue. This is functionally the highest in the country, so for those that refer to an "open market" this situation is far from an open market. There are literally no other business in Maine paying such a tax rate.

I realize that there is a desire to be helpful to the people of Maine's first nations, and I fully respect those efforts. In fact, \$3.6M of the Oxford Casino revenue in 2023 benefited the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy tribes. I respectfully ask that this committee look for creative ways to continue to support the Maine tribes without cannibalizing jobs in Oxford and Penobscot County.

Thank you for your time and I'd be happy to try to answer any questions.