

Written Testimony of Jason Clay In Opposition to LD 1902

To the Honorable Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and Members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

My name is Jason Clay. I own and operate Governor's Restaurants and Anglers Restaurants, serving communities across Eastern, Northern, and Central Maine. I also serve as the incoming Chair of the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce. While these roles overlap, I am here today primarily as a local employer and business owner.

I share the Committee's deep respect for the organizations that serve our veterans and nonprofits. They are the backbone of our communities. However, I believe LD 1902 is the wrong mechanism to support them.

1. Economic Destabilization This proposal authorizes a new class of electronic gaming that operates outside the rigorous regulatory and tax framework Maine has spent two decades perfecting. Maine's existing casinos were vetted through public referenda and are held to strict compliance standards. By contrast, LD 1902 introduces "gray market" style gaming that risks cannibalizing the customer base of our regulated facilities. This doesn't just hurt the casinos; it threatens the jobs, local suppliers, and tax revenues—including funds for education and harness racing—that our region relies upon.

2. A Matter of Fairness and Precedent In Maine, we have a clear precedent: gaming expansion is decided by the voters. Existing operators invested millions in infrastructure and staffing based on these established rules. Approving a massive expansion of electronic gaming through the legislature—without a statewide or local vote—is unfair to those who followed the rules and sets a dangerous precedent for how we manage regulated industries. This bill essentially creates 'casinos-lite' in every neighborhood without the public discourse or voter consent that established operators were required to secure.

3. Regulatory Inequality The devices contemplated in this bill resemble slot machines but lack the transparent oversight, auditing, and "bricks-and-mortar" investment required of current operators. We should not be creating a two-tiered system where one group must meet high hurdles while another is granted a shortcut.

Supporting our nonprofits is a shared value, but we should not do so by undermining a regulatory model that works. We can find better, more sustainable ways to help these organizations without destabilizing our local economy and bypassing the Maine voter.

I respectfully urge the Committee to vote **Ought Not To Pass** on LD 1902.

Sincerely,

Jason Clay