



Testimony in Opposition to LD 2080:

“An Act to Protect Consumers by Prohibiting the Use of Credit Cards in Sports Wagering”

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Harris Van Pate and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free-market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine.

While the bill is framed as a consumer protection measure, it instead represents an unnecessary and paternalistic expansion of state control over lawful financial choices made by adults—without clear evidence of effectiveness and with meaningful unintended consequences.

LD 2080 is paternalistic, not protective

LD 2080 does not prohibit sports wagering. It does not prohibit high-risk betting behavior. Instead, it selectively bans one lawful payment method—credit cards—while allowing functionally equivalent alternatives.

Adult Mainers may legally use credit cards to purchase alcohol, participate in casino gambling, buy lottery tickets, or engage in risky financial transactions. Singling out sports wagering for special treatment reflects moral judgment, not principled consumer protection.

If wagering itself is lawful, adults should retain the autonomy to decide how they pay for it.

The bill creates arbitrary and inconsistent regulation

The bill bans credit cards outright while allowing:

- debit cards,
- digital wallets (so long as the provider “assures” no credit card was used),
- prepaid cards,
- and “any other method approved by the director.”

This structure is internally inconsistent and largely symbolic. If credit-based wagering is inherently harmful, allowing near-identical substitutes undermines the logic of the ban. If it is not inherently harmful, the prohibition is unjustified.



The bill replaces clear rules with vague assurances and discretionary approvals, inviting uneven enforcement and regulatory uncertainty.

There is little evidence the policy works

Other countries that have enacted similar credit card bans have not demonstrated meaningful reductions in problem gambling rates.¹ In fact, in some cases, low-risk gamblers were hurt more than high risk ones. Instead, consumer behavior is typically displaced to debit cards, prepaid cards, or third-party payment systems.

In some cases, restrictions drive activity toward unregulated or offshore platforms, reducing—not improving—consumer protections. Public policy should be grounded in evidence. LD 2080 is not.

The bill sets a troubling precedent for financial micromanagement

Allowing the state to selectively restrict lawful payment methods based on perceived moral risk establishes a dangerous precedent. The logic underlying this bill could easily be extended to other lawful but politically disfavored activities. MPI strongly cautions against normalizing government control over how adults access their own finances absent clear, compelling justification. When the state restricts how adults may lawfully spend their own money without evidence of effectiveness, it moves beyond consumer protection and into unnecessary paternalism.

It avoids more effective, less intrusive alternatives

If the Legislature's goal is to address problem gambling, more direct and defensible tools exist:

- voluntary self-exclusion enhancements,
- user-selected deposit or loss limits,
- expanded treatment funding, and
- more transparent odds and risk disclosures.

LD 2080 avoids these targeted approaches in favor of a blunt, symbolic restriction that limits freedom broadly while offering no demonstrated benefit.

¹

<https://www.yogonet.com/international/news/2024/09/04/77501-uk-credit-card-gambling-ban-hits-lowrisk-gamblers-harder-report-shows>



Conclusion

In summary, LD 2080:

- substitutes paternalism for personal responsibility
- expands bureaucratic discretion
- increases compliance burdens
- lacks evidentiary support
- sets a poor precedent for government intrusion into lawful financial choices

For these reasons, Maine Policy Institute respectfully urges the Committee to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 2080.

Thank you for your time and consideration.