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Legislative Testimony
Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee
Milton F. Champion III – Executive Director
Gambling Control Unit
Department of Public Safety
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Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and Distinguished Members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, I am Milton Champion, Executive Director of the Gambling Control Unit within the Department of Public Safety. I am here today on behalf of the Department of Public Safety to testify "In Favor of" LD 2070 which is "An Act to Implement a Facility-based Monitoring System for Slot Machines". And I thank Senator Hickman for sponsoring this important measure.

When I became Executive Director in 2016, I questioned as to how I was to run our Gambling Control Unit. The answer was very clear, as if it were my own business. The first thing that came to my attention was the use of a central monitoring system for just two facilities versus each facility utilizing the same monitoring system with security measures similar to those of the central monitoring system. They, in fact, have the same monitoring capabilities as the central monitoring system. It is a duplication. So, in essence we have been paying for duplication since 2004 at an expense of 1.1 million a year or more.

In my view the use of a central monitoring system is better served when you have three machines at every truck stop or related business and need to monitor hundreds of machines over several locations within the state. The central system turns the machines on and off, records operations, pay outs, etc. as stated throughout several locations. This same type of system is currently used for the Maine Lottery monitoring the use of terminals in every gas station or convenience store as an example. But to monitor just two casinos, is just not business savvy. The biggest expense of the Gambling Control Unit is the expense of duplicate monitoring of slot machine activity. To go one step further, we currently have electronic table games that are not monitored by the central system. They are monitored by their individual systems or individual facility-based monitoring systems at each casino.

In my previous position as Chief of Slot Operations and Executive Director, we used facility-based monitoring systems in seven (7) facilities initially and since has grown to nine (9) facilities, and they are still in use today since 2006. That's just two years after inception of slot machines in Maine.

The current contract with Light and Wonder expires June 30, 2024. The transition from central system to facility based will take roughly four business days for Hollywood Casino and five business days for Oxford Casino. This transition will be completed with the assistance of the pre-qualified vender, Gaming Laboratories International (GLI). The devices that will be used by state inspectors to verify the future delivery of independent laboratory pre-certified software and devices for Maine is the Verify+ by Kobetron of which we currently have in use by Gambling Control Unit inspectors on site. The only real transition expense will be GLI's assistance and training of inspectors. Emergency rulemaking will be necessary in order to meet the June 30 deadline. The rule package is ready, as I did not intend to re-invent the wheel from previously written rules.

So, in closing I'm asking for your assistance in making the right business decision for the Gambling Control Unit to continue to provide the integrity of slot machine gaming at a greatly reduced expense and without unnecessary duplication. It will also give you the ability to utilize the annual 1.1-million-dollar expense in other areas of your choosing.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

Respectfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "M. G." followed by a horizontal flourish.