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BUREAU OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND LOTTERY OPERATIONS

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Testimony in Support of:

LD 2095, An Act to Prohibit the Bulk Purchasing of Lottery Tickets in Certain Lottery Games

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee. I'm Louis Luchini, Director of the Bureau of Alcoholic Beverages and Lottery Operations, and I'm here to testify in support of LD 2095, An Act to Prohibit the Bulk Purchasing of Lottery Tickets in Certain Lottery Games.

The Bureau has submitted this legislation in response to the rise in lottery ticket bulk purchasing activities across the country and internationally.

For background, a lottery bulk purchaser is an organization or syndicate that pools money to buy lottery tickets in extremely large quantities. These groups raise large sums of money whose sources are completely unknown to lotteries. They use game information from lotteries' websites and supplement it with FOIA and FOAA requests. When they identify a mathematical edge, they try to monopolize lottery purchases to win the jackpot.

Once a lottery game is targeted, bulk purchase syndicates will often hire individuals to travel the state and attempt to partner with willing lottery retailers. They make deals for the retailer to print tickets virtually non-stop to allow the syndicate to monopolize lottery purchases over the everyday consumer. They've hit several states over the last couple of years, perhaps most notably Texas, where one group was able to buy out a Texas draw game that paid over \$90M.

Bulk purchasers have operated here in Maine, too. Last summer, the Bureau began fielding calls from our partner lottery retailers that unknown individuals were walking into their stores and offering to wire large sums of money if the store would be willing to print thousands and thousands of tickets. In some cases, retailers reported the individual stated they were an investor, sometimes a professional gambler, and others were more truthful – that they were part of a bulk purchasing entity. At least one retailer reported a person walked in offering a duffle bag of cash.

After identifying willing retailer partners, the group began aggressively purchasing large amounts of our \$30 Progressive Fast Play tickets and eventually won the jackpot of over \$1.8M. Unfortunately, neither the Bureau nor the State Liquor and Lottery Commission had the authority to intervene and stop the bulk purchase transactions.

Several states – including Texas, Arizona, and Illinois – have taken action to prohibit these activities, whether through statute, rule, or other administrative action. We at the Maine Lottery agree – bulk purchasing syndicates threaten the integrity of the lottery, undermine fairness for the public player, and runs contrary to the legislative intent when Maine voters authorized the lottery back in 1974.

This bill proposes to:

- Define and prohibit bulk purchasing
- Allow the Lottery to refuse prize payment to a bulk purchaser
- Prohibit retailers from knowingly selling to a bulk purchaser
- Grant the State Liquor and Lottery Commission rulemaking authority around the bulk purchasing prohibition to further refine rules and be responsive as bulk purchasing entities' strategies evolve

Should the Legislature choose to move forward with this legislation, we'd respectfully request an emergency preamble be added so that we can stop these practices immediately.

In closing, the Bureau believes a prohibition on bulk purchasing as proposed in LD 2095 would protect consumers, preserve public trust, and ensure the lottery operates as originally intended.

Thank you for your consideration. I'm happy to answer questions.