



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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March 2, 2021 * 9:30am* Zoom

Testimony in support of SB 146 An Act Authorizing Sports Wagering, Online Casino Gaming, Online Lottery and Online Keno.

Dear Chairmen Bradley and Horn, Ranking Members Champagne and Green, and distinguished members of the Public Safety & Security Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of **SB 146 An Act Authorizing Sports Wagering, Online Casino Gaming, Online Lottery and Online Keno.**

My name is Kathleen McCarty and I am the State Representative for the 38th District that includes Waterford and a portion of Montville.

Before commenting on the bill, I would like to bring to your attention the important role that Connecticut's Native American tribes play in their communities and in the state. Over their 25 year history of Tribal/State agreements, the Mashantucket and Mohegan tribes have contributed over eight (8) billion dollars to state coffers. The Tribes represent one of the largest sources of revenue to the state and constitute one of its largest employers.

The devastating economic aspects of COVID-19 did not spare the gaming industry at the casinos, yet the Tribes steadfastly honored their commitment to the state by continuing to pay 25% of their gross revenue which is estimated to run at about 200 million dollars for this fiscal year. Additionally, millions of dollars in contribution to regional charities and non-profit organizations, educational grants to schools throughout the state, multiple food drives, PPE host distribution sites, and many other charitable activities make the Mashantucket and Mohegan tribes long-standing, pre and post pandemic exemplary community and state partners.

SB 146 would honor the exclusivity agreement by allowing sports betting and iGaming to fall under the scope of casino games run exclusively by the Tribes, thereby not only preserving the annual tribal slot revenue but adding potentially another 40 million dollars in revenue to the state.

Every state in the nation that has legalized sports betting and iGaming has done so using their existing casino framework since it makes sense on many levels. For example, both the Mashantucket and Mohegan tribes are uniquely positioned with the necessary expertise, regulatory body, and infrastructure to launch sports wagering and iGaming in an expeditious and competent fashion.

The language in the bill clearly defines sports wagering (76-87) and online casino gaming (lines 57 -62) and all of the necessary terms associated with each activity. Section 2 of the committee proposal allows for the Governor to enter into amended pacts with the tribal nations. **SB 146** also permits the Connecticut Lottery Corporation to sell lottery draw game tickets and conduct keno games online in accordance with agreements with the Tribes.

I am appreciative that section 26 of the bill directs the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to establish a program for the treatment and rehabilitation for chronic gamblers and for providing funding for mental health services. It is important that a dedicated streamline of funding from the expansion of gaming in the state be used to prevent and treat gambling disorders.

If I may offer a recommendation concerning the distribution of funding cited in the bill proposal, I would request that the funding earmarked for the “statewide tourism marketing” (line 252 in the bill) be allocated to the Tourism Fund as a whole in order to protect investment into the arts and cultural assets that are in need of financial support. The Tourism Fund unlike “statewide tourism marketing” uniquely would include: the CT Office of Tourism, statewide tourism marketing, CT Office of the Arts, CT Humanities and the myriad of organizations supported by those organizations through hundreds of grants. Hopefully, this modification to **SB 146** can be made so that the arts and culture can recover from the disproportionate adverse impact that COVID-19 has had on its industry.

It is the right time to ensure that the state of Connecticut proactively ensures that its gaming, entertainment, tourism and art and culture sectors remain competitive with those in surrounding states. **SB 146** maximizes revenue for the state, supports our municipalities, education, and tourism through dedicated funding streams mentioned in the bill.

Over the past several years the Southeastern delegation has worked consistently in a bipartisan manner advocating for sports wagering and iGaming in our state under the purview of the Mashantucket and Mohegan tribes. Senator Cathy Osten needs to be credited for her perseverance and leadership on this issue. The expansion of gaming will preserve thousands of jobs and bring much needed new revenue to the state. With the Governor’s recent announcement and approval of sports wagering and iGaming and the question of exclusivity being resolved through appropriate interpretation, collaboration and understanding between the parties, it is my hope that **SB146** will be enacted without further delay.

I would respectfully request that the Public Safety and Security Committee pass **SB 146** out of committee with the proposed recommended changes.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely yours,



Kathleen M. McCarty
State Representative, 38th District
Waterford, Montville