

## **Testimony of Steven McKay (3810 Shakespeare Way, Monrovia, MD) in Opposition to Bill 18-10 on Allowing Off-Track Betting in the Limited Industrial Zoning District**

Council President Otis, Vice President Keegan-Ayer and Council members, I'm here tonight to speak against the proposed change to the Zoning Ordinance to allow off-track betting in the LI District. Admittedly, I'm a little conflicted about OTB. I don't have real heartache about OTB on its own merits, however, I worry where it may lead. Specifically, I'm concerned that paving the way for OTB could be a step toward casino gambling here in Frederick County. You can easily envision it – you begin with machine betting on the races. Then they come back for slots – how different is it, right? Next, you're discussing machine versions of the table games and after that, live table games. It's a slippery slope, indeed. Let me be clear on this, I'm adamantly opposed to casino gambling here in the County.

Clearly, we've had OTB here in the County, right over in the Cracked Claw in Urbana. Some have said that it was never a problem, and why should we think a new OTB would be any different. However, I've also heard of the darker side of that establishment. I've heard of broken families and a suicide in the parking lot. This is an inherent part of gambling – it gets abused. True, those are individual decisions each time but still, let's not pretend that this is a harmless game. It's not.

Those same people will argue that we had the Cracked Claw and that didn't lead to casino gaming. To that point, I'll remind you that for much of that OTB's existence, Maryland also didn't have legalized casino gambling. So this really is a different conversation now, and the notion that OTB could be that stepping stone to something else is a very real conversation to be had.

But if the Council is of the mind to approve this, even those of you who share my concern and opposition to the casino gaming that may come next, I would urge you to do this. Be very clear with people about what happens with the gambling revenue. You see I had an extensive conversation on Facebook about this bill. There was a lot of engagement and comment, with people being fairly mixed in their views. A number of people argued in favor of OTB because of the economic benefits to the County from the gambling. Some saw it as a boon to the schools, others as a source to defray our property taxes. Certainly the County benefits from any successful business, but is gambling really any different than say, a successful restaurant?

So I called the State Racing Commission and I asked them what the local share of the gambling revenue from OTB is. Do you know the answer? Zero. There is no local share. Casino gambling includes a local share, OTB does not. Again, the County will benefit from having a successful business, but this won't be a magic pot of money for the school system or for our property taxes. People hear gambling, and they are conditioned to think that there are different rules about the revenue – but there isn't.

So this is my message to you. If you want to approve this bill, draw a bright clear line in the sand saying yes to OTB, but NO to more gambling. Also, be open with people that there is no local revenue share from the gambling. It's not a magic pot of money to fix our schools. You owe us all that honesty. Thank you.