



To: Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs Committee
From: Wendy Mays, Executive Director, Vermont Association of Broadcasters
Re: Legalization and Regulation of Sports Wagering
Date: February 10, 2022

Dear Mr. Chair and honorable members of the committee,

The more than one hundred free over-the-air radio and television stations operating in Vermont are dedicated to making the communities they are licensed to by the FCC better places in which to live, work and recreate.

All too often, broadcast journalists find themselves reporting on scams and illegal activity with vulnerable Vermonters being the victims. Right now, sports wagering in Vermont is driven to the illegal market, similar to the state of the cannabis industry until the legislature did something about it. Using the same concept as cannabis, Vermont can combat illegal sports wagering by providing a legal alternative with consumer protections. Rapid nationwide expansion of this idea is happening now; Thirty two states are in the process of or have already implemented legalized and regulated sports betting.

That is why the Vermont Association of Broadcasters (VAB) urges your committee to please take up S.77 before crossover to begin the conversation of how best to legalize and regulate sports wagering in Vermont during *this session*. Continuing to leave this legislation on the wall only allows vulnerable Vermonters to continue getting swindled by fraudulent sports wagering platforms and delays Vermont's ability to create a new tax revenue stream.

A legalized and regulated wagering paradigm would allow broadcasters to make visible and hold accountable in the court of public opinion those bad actors that prey upon our citizens via faux professional sports wagering portals. At the same time, the act of reporting the story would reinforce a safe, regulated environment.

Whereas we understand there are a variety of economic models being used by other states, we urge you to adopt a model that promotes competition among legal operators. Educating Vermonters about responsible gambling, signs of problem gambling, where to get help and how to find legal state-approved trustworthy sports wagering platforms are areas in which broadcasters can contribute and uphold the commitment to serving Vermonters. In addition, the development of a new industry from which to generate income allows over-the-air broadcasters to continue to provide fair, balanced and factual news reporting and information that serves the public interest.

VAB members support the legislature's efforts to legalize sports wagering and ask that you please take up S.77 so Vermont can lead in this space, as our state does in so many other areas.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Wendy Mays'.

Wendy Mays
Executive Director
Vermont Association of Broadcasters