



Pokégnek Bodéwadmik


POKAGON BAND OF POTAWATOMI
GAMING COMMISSION

August 12, 2021

Greetings Chairman Filler and esteemed members of the Committee

My name is Dave Vialpando. I serve as Executive Director of the Pokagon Band Gaming Commission for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians of Michigan and Indiana. I am here to express our support for House Bill 5368. The Pokagon Band Gaming Commission is an independent tribal gaming regulatory agency as outlined in the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, responsible for the regulatory oversight of the Pokagon Band's three casinos located in the State of Michigan and one casino in Indiana. The role of the Gaming Commission is to ensure the integrity of gaming, the protection of Tribal assets, and safeguard public health and safety.

There are twelve tribal gaming regulatory agencies and gaming commissions in Michigan regulating twenty-four casino across the state. Each gaming agency is charged with conducting suitability backgrounds and licensing for the thousands of employees, vendors, vendor technicians and others involved in this multi-million-dollar industry. Each gaming commission relies on access to accurate and comprehensive criminal history information on licensing applicants. We, through our background screening partners, obtain criminal history information on these applicants through Michigan court clerks and we must do so in order fulfill our statutory mandate to exclude individuals from the casino gaming industry who pose a risk to game integrity, casinos assets, and the safety of employees and the millions of casino patrons visiting our Tribes' casinos each year – Michigan consumers. House Bill 5368 ensures that tribal gaming commissions across the state can continue to obtain the information we require to make informed licensing suitability determinations.



The Pokagon Band Gaming Commission has experience using ICHAT. The ICHAT system has not consistently provided timely information and it excludes certain offenses depending on the level of offense - offenses such as assault and battery, larceny, and embezzlement we have found missing from ICHAT. Any of these offenses may preclude a person from being found suitable for a gaming license. For obvious reasons, we would not want individuals with a history of criminal offenses such as these to obtain a license to work in our casinos placing our businesses and patrons at risk, and not having access to complete criminal history records through court clerks as we now do, makes this a distinct possibility.

Once licensed, casino employees and vendor technicians undergo recurrent background checks at the time of their gaming license renewal. Conducting criminal background checks directly with the courts, who are the source of the public record information is crucial to ensuring suitability for continued licensure in the casino gaming industry.

I thank you for your time and your consideration of this important legislation.

David Vialpando, Executive Director
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