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**Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee
February 9, 2016**

HB 242 Criminal Law - Betting, Wagering, and Gambling - Civil Offense

SUPPORT

The ACLU of Maryland supports HB 242, which would decriminalize certain gambling offenses, making them punishable by a civil fine instead of criminal penalties.

Criminal penalties, unnecessary entanglement with the criminal justice system and the accompanying criminal record—even for misdemeanors—can have severe and lasting impacts on Marylanders. HB 242 is an important step away from recent trends toward draconian over-criminalization of non-violent, consensual activity. Moreover, by decriminalizing gambling offenses, HB 242 has the potential to free up resources for law enforcement, the judiciary, and jails.

For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 242.

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