

**Testimony of James H. Walker, Jr. – United Steelworkers, Sub-District 1 Director  
Before the House Finance Committee – 6-03-2025**

Chair Stewart and members of the House Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding House Bill 298. My name is James Walker, and I serve as Sub-District 1 Director of the United Steelworkers, a bargaining representative of employees at JACK Cleveland Casino, Hollywood Toledo Casino, Hollywood Columbus Casino, and Hard Rock Cincinnati Casino. We represent hundreds of employees at these locations, including poker dealers, cashiers, cooks, slot attendants and a host of others. These positions are dependent on in-person customers and would be cut if in-person casino visitation declines due to the availability of iCasino in Ohio.

We strongly oppose the legalization of iCasino currently proposed in House Bill 298. We cannot support an expansion of gaming that would result in the loss of good, union jobs and will threaten our members' standard of living.

We have found in other jurisdictions that iCasino would not create enough jobs to replace lost casino jobs due to the cannibalization caused by iCasino, which results in significant reductions in visitation and revenue. A Maryland study suggests gaming revenue would decline by more than 10% if iGaming were legalized. If this were to happen in Ohio, it would mean fewer service jobs for the Ohioans we and other Unions represent at the casinos, including dealers, slot attendants, cashiers, servers, bartenders, and cooks. In neighboring Pennsylvania, iGaming eliminated 2,000 jobs – nearly 10% of all Pennsylvania brick-and-mortar casino jobs.

Through collective bargaining, we and the other unions at the casinos have negotiated good wages and benefits that allow Ohio workers to support their families, have affordable healthcare, and retire with dignity. These unionized casino jobs cannot easily be replaced by other service sector jobs. High-wage, high-benefit, unionized casino jobs not only lift up casino workers and their families but also produce important secondary economic benefits by increasing consumer spending, causing indirect job creation, and reducing reliance on social services in jurisdictions with casinos.

The equation is simple – less play at the Ohio casinos equals fewer jobs for Ohioans. We urge you to protect these jobs by opposing the legalization of iCasino in Ohio.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

James H. Walker, Jr.  
Sub-District 1 Director  
United Steelworkers