

Proponent Testimony of Rev. Morris Eason
Round 1 Ministry
Senate Select Committee on Gaming
February 24, 2021

Mr. Chairman Schuring, members of the Senate Select Committee on Gaming, my name is Rev. Morris Eason. I help at-risk youth through court-mandated training to heal a kid heal his/her body, mind and soul.

I am here today to testify and to enlighten members of the committee about ways in which the charitable dollars raised through instant bingo impact our local communities.

I am the founder of Round 1 Ministries. I have a passion for helping both kids and adults overcome life's many struggles, through a proven regimen of boxing, training and life-coaching.

I grew up in a racially mixed neighborhood on the east side of Cleveland and was bullied by other children because I was small and African American. I was bullied so badly that I actually avoided attending school because of fear of physical harm coming to me.

To escape the violence of my neighborhood, I doctored my birth certificate in order to enlist in the Army. I entered basic training in Fort Polk Louisiana at age 15. I was bullied in the Army as well. I found myself in a fight with a much larger soldier. I threw a punch that sent my abuser to the ground. The altercation was witnessed by the Fort Polk boxing instructor who convinced me to start training with him. Soon after, I became one of the top United States Army European welter weight fighters, winning many bouts and gaining a reputation as a contender.

During my boxing career I ventured into a lifestyle of drugs, alcohol and crime, a lifestyle that almost took my life. On two separate occasions, I spent time at the Mansfield State Penitentiary. I eventually reformed my life through faith, and dedicated myself to serving God as an ordained minister.

The problem kids have is that it is hard to find a HERO. I only stopped being a victim after I began boxing in the Army. Now it is my mission and passion to stop bullying by introducing youth to the sport of boxing through motivational and inspirational programming that teaches kids to Stand Up, Speak Out and Lean In. Through increased self-esteem and confidence, not only do kids learn to stand up for themselves, they also have the courage to speak up and stop others from bullying. The goal is to help them to stand up and just be who they are and to feel safe in their own skin.

Kids come to me usually in a state where they feel left out, afraid and even suicidal. We work together on their physical body through boxing, and their mental and emotional wellbeing through life coaching to make better choices going forward. As these kids feel better about themselves, they increase their positive energy and see a bright future ahead. I also work with veterans dealing with PTSD and female victims of domestic violence to become physically and emotionally stronger to deal with the issues that they desperately want to overcome as well.

Mr. Chairman I tell you these stories because I want you and the committee members to understand the trickle-down effect of preventing the use of charitable electronic bingo. If you fail to pass this bill this year or pass another version of the bill that limits the charitable dollars raised and its uses, you will impact the lives of real people in the communities who these charitable dollars support. Round 1 Ministries is heavily dependent on access to these charitable dollars. Without the support from the VFW Charities, my organization cannot continue to serve these kids and adults who rely on my help. I am passionate about this. I want to continue to work with these kids to stop all of this bullying, drug use, violence and suicide.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.