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Michigan Gaming Control Board Executive Director celebrates successful 3-year anniversary in multi-billion dollar industry

DETROIT, May 28, 2024 — Michigan Gaming Control Board Executive Director Henry Williams marks a milestone achievement with the celebration of his three-year anniversary this month leading the agency that helps oversee the state’s dynamic and competitive multi-billion dollar gaming industry. During his tenure, he has led a transformative effort to improve the infrastructure and operational efficiency of the organization, setting new industry standards and accomplishing strategic initiatives.

A regulator in one of the fastest-growing U.S. gaming markets, Williams’ 23 years of gaming experience combined with his strategic vision and dedicated stewardship have undeniably helped propel Michigan’s gaming industry to new heights of prosperity. From June 2021 through April 2024, the total handle for internet sports betting and retail sports betting, the latter of which takes place in Detroit’s three commercial casinos, has reached a staggering \$14.1 billion. Accompanying this immense success, the total adjusted gross receipts (AGR) and qualified adjusted gross receipts (QAGR) — which are collected from internet gaming, fantasy contests, and the Detroit casinos — amount to an impressive \$8.9 billion. Notably, the state has garnered \$1.26 billion in total wagering taxes during this period and, as of April 2024, Williams has overseen the payment of \$722 million in gaming taxes to the City of Detroit and \$978 million to Michigan’s School Aid Fund since his appointment as executive director.



“I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve at the helm of the Michigan Gaming Control Board for the past three years, leading a talented team of dedicated public servants,” **MGCB Executive Director Henry Williams** said. “Together, we have achieved remarkable success in overseeing the state’s gaming industry, resulting in significant multi-billion dollar revenues that benefit our state and its residents. I extend my sincere gratitude to Governor Whitmer for consistently supporting our budget requests and to the legislators for their bipartisan approval of our funding. Their continued support ensures the MGCB’s ability to effectively regulate the gaming industry and protect the public interest.”

A lifelong dedicated public servant, Williams was appointed as the agency’s executive director for a six-year term by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer on May 17, 2021. Under his leadership, the MGCB has seen remarkable growth and progress. He helped spearhead changes to the law to provide a more sustainable, reliable funding source for charitable Millionaire Party fundraisers through internet gaming taxes (\$3 million) instead of charitable gaming license fees and ticket sales held in the state Lottery Fund. Signed into law in December 2022 by Gov. Whitmer, Public Acts 269 and 270 of 2022 have allowed the MGCB to continue its high level of service to charities and implement technological advancements — such as the online portal for Millionaire Party applications — that streamline operations while eliminating the potential need for fee increases or limits on issuing licenses.

In a forward-thinking move, Williams established the MGCB’s Responsible Gaming section when he became executive director and instituted community outreach efforts focused on responsible gaming, reflecting a commitment to ensuring the overall health and welfare of participants in the state’s gaming industry. Responsible Gaming section staff regularly update the Disassociated Persons List and maintain a statewide Responsible Gaming Database, both pursuant to Michigan law, to help those who believe they have a problem with gambling. Additionally, Williams championed the initiative to secure \$3 million of ongoing, annual state budget funding — a first

in the 25-year history of the MGCB — for ‘Don’t Regret the Bet’, the agency’s internationally acclaimed and multi-award winning integrated marketing campaign developed in collaboration with King Media. ‘Don’t Regret the Bet’ aims to prevent Michiganders from developing gambling problems before they start and reduce the number of people in the state who develop a serious gambling addiction.

Furthermore, the MGCB’s efforts under Williams’ direction have been instrumental in cracking down on illegal gambling activities, promoting a safer and more regulated gaming environment and protecting the interests of Michigan citizens. As part of its work to halt illegal gambling and under Williams’ leadership, the MGCB and the Michigan Liquor Control Commission began a joint effort in 2022 to educate the public and business owners about the illegal use of gambling machines. Williams regularly meets with local leaders to discuss methods of combating illegal gaming across Michigan and the agency is also working to address the increase in offshore sportsbooks and online casinos that illegally operate stateside — and that continue to pose a threat to citizens and the legal, regulated U.S. gaming market. Sweepstakes casino operators and certain unregulated gaming sites have taken note of the MGCB’s continued regulatory efforts to enforce Michigan gaming laws and are subsequently making their own business decisions to cease operations in the state.

Moreover, Williams has demonstrated a strong commitment to MGCB employees’ well-being by instituting valuable support services, such as lactation rooms for new mothers, and encouraging professional learning and community volunteer programs, as well as DEI initiatives, that promote employee engagement within the organization. Other notable achievements include a strategic focus on enhancing internal IT systems for streamlined operations, the establishment of higher levels for employee growth opportunities, and a considerable increase in the overall Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) count within the agency, now surpassing 50 dedicated professionals.

Additionally, he has worked to enhance public accessibility to the agency, fostering transparency and accountability within the state’s robust, fast-growing gaming industry. To that end, Williams remains committed to educating Michigan’s citizens about gaming and finding new ways to reach them. In March 2023, he started an agency podcast, ‘Double Down Michigan,’ to educate people about the industry in Michigan, discussing a variety of topics including licensing, illegal gambling, and responsible gaming with internal MGCB staff and external guests.

Participating in high-profile panel discussions at industry conferences and events, Williams continues to showcase his expertise through his thoughtful leadership and contributions to the evolution of best practices in gaming regulations — including having played a pivotal role in shaping a groundbreaking multi-jurisdictional agreement for poker operations by fostering cooperation and standardization among various participating states across the U.S.

As the MGCB marks this significant milestone and the halfway point in Williams’ current tenure, the agency looks forward to a future marked by continued growth, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to excellence under Williams’ visionary leadership.

About the MGCB

With nearly 200 employees, the Michigan Gaming Control Board oversees and regulates the gaming industry in Michigan, ensuring fairness, integrity, and compliance within the sector. With a focus on responsible gaming practices and operational excellence, the MGCB plays a vital role in maintaining a thriving gaming landscape within the Great Lakes region.

*Gambling in any form is for entertainment purposes only. If you or someone you know may have a gambling problem, contact the National Problem Gambling Helpline, which offers hope and help without stigma or shame. Call **1-800-GAMBLER**, text 800GAM, or visit www.1800gamblerchat.org. Help is available 24/7 and is free and confidential. Michigan citizens can also visit the [Responsible Gaming page of the MGCB website](#) for information on self-exclusion programs including the Disassociated Persons List and the Internet Gaming and Sports Betting Responsible Gaming Database, and DontRegretTheBet.org for additional tools to game responsibly.*

The Michigan Gaming Control Board shall ensure the conduct of fair and honest gaming to protect the interests of the citizens of the state of Michigan. Learn more at Michigan.gov/MGCB.