



City of Alexandria, Virginia
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Alyia Gaskins
Mayor

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Dear Honorable Conferees,

Thank you for your dedication to public service and your commitment to responsible governance. I am writing to express my concerns about the renewed effort to legalize "skill" games through the state budget process. As you consider the final budget, I urge you to remove any provisions related to these devices and pass a clean budget bill.

The legalization of thousands of these machines without a clear regulatory framework and without allowing localities to make their own decisions raises significant concerns. Communities should have the ability to determine what is best for their residents, particularly when it comes to economic and public safety impacts.

Research and past experience have shown that these machines disproportionately affect lower-income neighborhoods. Before they were banned, nearly 70% of these machines were located in areas where household incomes fell below the state median. This raises concerns about economic justice, as these devices can create financial hardships for already vulnerable residents.

Public safety is another pressing issue. Law enforcement officials across Virginia have reported increased crime in locations where these machines operate. The 2022 JLARC report confirmed these concerns, noting a rise in criminal activity around establishments that house these devices.

Additionally, Alexandrians have voiced their opposition to these devices, with public polling showing a strong majority against their legalization. Rather than embedding this policy into the budget, this issue should be fully vetted through the legislative process, allowing for comprehensive debate and input from local communities.

I urge you to remove any provisions related to skill games from the budget and to support policies that prioritize economic fairness, public safety, and local decision-making. Thank you for your leadership on this issue and for your continued commitment to responsible policymaking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alyia Gaskins".

Alyia Gaskins
Mayor
City of Alexandria