



Happy Valley Adventure Bureau Statement of Support Category 4 Casino License for SC Gaming OpCo. LLC Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board hearing Monday, Aug. 16, 2021

Good afternoon, I'm Dave Gerdes, Vice President of Sales and Marketing for The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau, the official tourism promotion agency for Centre County. On behalf of President and CEO Fritz Smith and the HVAB Board of Directors, I'm here to express support for the proposed Category 4 casino in the former Macy's site in College Township, Centre County.

Speaking from a visitor perspective, our travelers want options. A destination that offers a variety of activities to engage in is attractive to both leisure and business travelers, as well as to local residents. The addition of a mini-casino to our offerings will assist the HVAB in its efforts to grow leisure traveler visitation. But it also will help with our efforts to attract several other segments: the group tour market, meetings segment, and the amateur sports markets. For the meetings segment, which usually occurs mid-week, it gives the attendees an additional activity to engage in when the meeting is over or during a break. When sports tournaments are here there is often down time between games, and spending a few hours in the casino is a great way to fill some of those hours.

We are also particularly happy to see the introduction of the Casino into our community because of the employment opportunities it will provide. The 350 full-time jobs that will be created, as well as the many jobs it will stimulate with suppliers and with the spending these employees will do in the community, will be a tremendous economic stimulus for Centre County. The Hospitality Industry is one of the few where someone can start in an entry level position and work their way into well-paying supervisory and managerial positions without a college degree. Other casinos in the state are filled with stories of employees who started in supporting positions and climbed the management path and now have good family sustaining jobs. This will happen here as well.

The HVAB is a 350-member organization. Our partner/members in the Hospitality community; the hotels, restaurants, tourism attractions, performing arts venues, marketing firms etc. are enthusiastic about the opportunity to have another exciting partner that they can work with to combine special offers. Providing another reason for visitors to come to Happy Valley means their stay will be longer, and they will spend more money. The result will be a more consistent level of business for our existing hotels, restaurants and retail shops and more.

The proposed casino could also be a catalyst for continued redevelopment of the mall property and the surrounding area. The potential long-term economic impact beyond that generated solely by the casino warrants consideration.

Earlier this year, the HVAB team had the opportunity to meet with casino president and CEO Eric Pearson, who along with Bally's, has considerable experience and expertise in the gaming industry. The discussion provided a better understanding of the overall operation of and customer for this level of casino; staff training requirements, including protocols for identifying and helping problem gamblers; and an overall commitment to creating a positive entertainment experience for patrons and employees. Those behind the casino project have an expressed desire to be a valuable part of the community for years to come. That pledge reinforces expectations for a well-operated establishment, and is essential to the HVAB Board's support for this project now and moving forward.

The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau recognizes and appreciates that a casino will not appeal to every resident. To that end, it will not be a draw for every visitor to Happy Valley. However, we believe that a professionally and responsibly managed mini-casino will provide greater job opportunities for our regional workforce; strengthen the local tax base; help revitalize the Nittany Mall; potentially attract new entertainment options to the area; and enhance efforts to grow visitation and visitor spending, generating positive impacts for the entire county.

From the HVAB to the casino partners we say: Welcome to Happy Valley!