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Sen. Robert M. Tomlinson
Illegal Gambling Devices

In the near future I plan to introduce legislation to stop the proliferation of illegal gambling devices. These devices advertised as "games of skill" continue to flourish within the Commonwealth despite strong enforcement efforts. These "Pennsylvania Skill Game" machines can be found in liquor establishments and clubs and are rapidly expanding into convenience stores and malls. These machines use the name Pennsylvania despite the fact that there isn't any regulation or oversight from the Commonwealth. In some cases whole rooms are devoted to these machines making them look like mini-casinos. A player inserts cash (in some cases these machines will accept \$100 bills) to win a cash prize.

Many people view gambling as a victimless crime; however, we must these machines remain unregulated. There is no consumer protection provided through monitoring to prevent minors from gambling, assist problem gamblers, regulate payout rates or ensure collection of taxes.

Furthermore these machines have been strategically placed near Lottery machines thereby diverting funds from the Lottery and the programs it supports. Almost 18 percent of Lottery retailers have at least one skill game machine and that number continues to grow. During a recent Senate Appropriations Committee budget hearing, Pennsylvania Lottery officials testified that the direct sales impact will amount to \$95 million annually. Considering that the Pennsylvania Lottery generated more than \$1 billion in FY17-18 to benefit programs for our most vulnerable seniors, any diversion of funds will lead to cuts in critical programs such as prescription drugs (funds 17,200 prescriptions daily), long term living services (funds \$684,000 in care services daily), meals (provides 29,300 meals daily) and transportation (101,000 free and reduced-fare shared rides daily).

Additionally machines have been found next to candy vending machines with no safeguards to prohibit minors from playing. Conservative estimates by the Pennsylvania State Police show there are approximately 13,500 machines in Pennsylvania and that number is growing every day.

These machines are advertised as games of skill which manufacturers say make them different from slot machines. My legislation provides clarity to the definition of a slot machine. I ask you to join me in cosponsoring this legislation.