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Colum Eastwood MLA
Chair, Committee for Communities,
Room 430,
Parliament Buildings,
Ballymiscaw, Stormont,
Belfast,
BT4 3XX

16 November 2016

Re: Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill

Dear Chair,

The Northern Ireland Turf Guardians Association (NITGA) trust that you received its written submission in relation to the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill, and understand that it will take time for the Committee to work its way through all of the evidence.

However, NITGA is very keen to re-emphasise its interest in meeting with the Committee to fully explain its position. We acknowledge that our issue is quite different to those organisations that you have heard from to this point, and it is in this context that we are eager to address the difficulties that our members currently face in relation to the growth of illegal gambling, and how this relates to the licensed trade.

NITGA strongly believe, that adding '*aiding and abetting illegal gambling on a licensed premise*' to Schedule 10A (penalty points for offences punishable with level 3 fine), would provide the PSNI with a valuable tool to challenge the growth of the illegal bookmaking market. Therefore, it is our contention that the challenges that our members face are at least partially addressed by the Licensing Bill.

At the same time, NITGA is very conscious that the Committee may be concerned that the issues that our members face, are not explicitly linked to the licensing of alcohol and thus fall outside the scope of the legislation. Nonetheless, publicans are bound to ensure they remain in good standing to ensure they satisfy the conditions of the licence, and those who are found to be partaking in illegal bookmaking activity should thus be subject to significant penalties.

In conclusion, NITGA would very much welcome the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee, and sincerely hope that you consider inviting us to meet with its members.

We look forward to hearing from you,

Yours Sincerely,

Adrian Eastwood.
(Chair of the Northern Ireland Turf Guardians Association).