



May 17, 2022

Marcus D. Fruchter, Administrator
Illinois Gaming Board
160 North LaSalle
Suite 300
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Dear Administrator Fruchter,

We are writing to express our concern that the Illinois Gaming Board has advanced an application for online-only sports wagering by Tekkorp Digital Acquisition Corp LLC, DBA Caliente Interactive.ⁱ

Caliente Interactive is part of Grupo Caliente, a Mexican gambling company owned by notorious dog track owner Jorge Hank Rhon.ⁱⁱ Mr. Rhon has been surrounded by controversy for decades, therefore granting Grupo Caliente a license would harm the integrity of the Illinois Gaming Board and cast doubt on your effectiveness as a regulator. We are specifically concerned by the following publicly known facts regarding Mr. Rhon and Grupo Caliente:

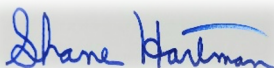
1. The Nevada Gaming Control Board cited Grupo Caliente in three different public hearings relative to the licensing suitability of a gaming company in June 1997, as well as in connection with a second gaming company in October 2002. Effectively, the NGCB directed these gaming companies to conclude any current contracts they had with Grupo Caliente and not renew contracts.ⁱⁱⁱ
2. According to a 2007 report prepared by the New York Office of the Inspector General, Grupo Caliente “has been the subject of numerous allegations of illegal activities.” Additionally, citing other sources, the report indicates that Mr. Rhon “has been suspected by U.S. law enforcement and Mexican authorities of illegal money laundering activities related to illicit drug trafficking, particularly with the Arellano Felix drug cartel based in Tijuana.”^{iv}
3. On numerous occasions, Mr. Rhon has been linked to the trafficking of endangered wildlife. For example, in 1991 he was fined \$25,000 after an individual attempted to cross the border with an endangered White Bengal Tiger cub that apparently had been born at his private zoo.^v Similarly, in 1995 Mr. Rhon was arrested at a Mexican airport after customs officials searched him and discovered a trove of animal skins and ivory from endangered species. He was arrested in connection with the 1995 incident, but was later acquitted.^{vi}
4. In 1988, a reporter named Hector “El Gato” Felix Miranda, who wrote for the newspaper Zeta, was assassinated on his way to work. Two Agua Caliente security guards were later

convicted. Before his assassination, Miranda was researching allegations regarding Mr. Rhon's personal drug use.^{vii}

5. According to greyhound protection group GREY2K USA Worldwide, Mr. Rhon's Tijuana dog track, Agua Caliente, has little to no animal welfare standards in place.^{viii}
6. The Agua Caliente racetrack is connected to a current, ongoing investigation regarding the disappearance of one of Mr. Rhon's employees.^{ix}
7. Mr. Rhon was arrested and detained by the federal government in 2011 after 88 guns were found at his home, including a firearm that was linked to a murder. He was later released and the charges were dropped.^x
8. In April of 2021 the Governor of Baja, Mexico, Jaime Bonilla Valdez described Mr. Rhon as the head of a "criminal group" and quoted a former governor as saying "All roads lead to the Racecourse." He accused Mr. Rhon of being personally responsible for the high crime rate in his state.^{xi}

In light of these facts, we urge you to reconsider your decision to advance the license application for Caliente Interactive. If you have any questions please contact us.

Sincerely,



Les Bernal, National Director

Shane Hartman, Executive Director

Stop Predatory Gambling

Illinois Church Action on Alcohol and Addiction Problems



Zach Savella Stallard, Organizer

Stop Predatory Gambling Illinois

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- ⁱ Chris Altruda, “IGB Moves Tekkor Digital Forward For Online Sports Betting License,” *Sports Handle*, April 28, 2022, <https://sportshandle.com/illinois-gaming-board-online-sports-wagering-license/> (accessed May 11, 2022).
- ⁱⁱ Grupo Caliente, <http://www.grupocaliente.com.mx/> (accessed May 11, 2022).
- ⁱⁱⁱ Kristine Hamann, State Inspector General, “Report To The Governor On The Integrity Of Those Seeking To Operate The Racetracks At Aqueduct, Belmont Park and Saratoga,” *State Of New York Office Of The Inspector General*, June 1, 2007, <https://yonkertribune.typepad.com/files/report-to-the-governor-on-the-integrity-of-those-seeking-to-operate-the-racetracks-at-aqueduct-belmont-park-and-saratoga.pdf> (accessed May 11, 2022).
- ^{iv} *Id.*
- ^v Neal Matthews, “Jorge Hank Rhon, Caliente racetrack owner, owned nine pet shops, six veterinary clinics,” *San Diego Reader*, November 27, 1991, <https://www.sandiegoreader.com/news/1991/nov/27/tyger-tyger-sleek-and-bright-were-you-stolen-night/> (accessed May 11, 2022); Josh Kun, “The Island of Jorge Hank Rhon,” *LA Weekly*, February 15, 2006, <https://www.laweekly.com/the-island-of-jorge-hank-rhon/> (accessed May 11, 2022).
- ^{vi} Josh Kun, “The Island of Jorge Hank Rhon”; Lowell Bergman, “Family Tree – The Hanks,” *PBS Frontline*, 2000, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/mexico/family/bergman.html> (accessed May 11, 2022); “Mexico: Ex-Tijuana mayor Hank Rhon on weapons charges,” *BBC*, June 8, 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-13703807> (accessed May 13, 2022); “Son of former Mexican minister detained,” *UPI*, May 23, 1995, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1995/05/23/Son-of-former-Mexican-minister-detained/2552801201600/> (accessed May 13, 2022); Sandra Dibble, “Mexican military detains former Tijuana Mayor Jorge Hank Rhon,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 4, 2011, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/sdut-mexican-military-detains-former-tijuana-mayor-jorg-2011jun04-story.html> (accessed May 13, 2022).
- ^{vii} Josh Kun, “The Island of Jorge Hank Rhon”; Lowell Bergman, “Family Tree – The Hanks”; Kevin Sullivan, “Gunmen Kill Editor of Tijuana Newspaper,” *The Washington Post*, June 23, 2004, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2004/06/23/gunmen-kill-editor-of-tijuana-newspaper/633f1dc4-640e-4ec6-84de-f30c884dd157/> (accessed May 11, 2022).
- ^{viii} Carey Theil, “Greyhounds Run Into the Ground at Mexico Track,” *Saving Greys*, October 7, 2015, <http://blog.grey2kusa.org/2015/> (accessed May 11, 2022).
- ^{ix} Adela Navarro Bello, “Once again crime haunts Hank,” *Zeta Tijuana*, April 22, 2022, <https://zetatijuana.com/2022/04/otra-vez-el-crimen-ronda-a-hank/> (accessed May 11, 2022).
- ^x Richard Marosi, “Ex-mayor of Tijuana Jorge Hank Rhon arrested,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 5, 2011, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2011-jun-05-la-fg-mexico-rhon-20110605-story.html> (accessed May 11, 2022); Sandra Dibble, “Feds: Guns seized at home of ex-TJ mayor tied to homicides,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 10, 2011, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/sdut-guns-seized-residence-ex-tijuana-mayor-linked-homi-2011jun10-story.html> (accessed May 13, 2022); Elisabeth Malkin, “Ex-Mayor Of Tijuana Investigated In Killing,” *The New York Times*, June 14, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/15/world/americas/15mexico.html> (accessed May 13, 2022).
- ^{xi} Erika Gallego, “Bonilla blames Hank for threats against him; he links him to the CJNG,” *La Voz De La Frontera*, April 2, 2021, https://www.lavozdelafrontera-com-mx.translate.google/local/culpa-bonilla-a-hank-de-amenazas-en-su-contra-lo-liga-al-cjng-6549921.html?x_tr_sl=es&x_tr_tl=en&x_tr_hl=en&x_tr_pto=sc (accessed May 11, 2022).