



Written Statement of Diana Goode, Executive Director

Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling

Public Safety & Security Committee

Informational Forum on Gaming

Tuesday, February 11, 2020

Sen. Bradley, Rep. Verrengia and Members of the Committee:

My name is Diana Goode, Executive Director of the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG). On behalf of the CCPG, the approximately 70,000 Connecticut adults identified as meeting the clinical criteria for gambling disorder, as well as the additional 285,000 who are at risk of developing a problem in their lifetime, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

The CCPG works with a wide variety of regional stakeholders to prevent problem gambling and help those who may be impacted. We do not advocate for or against gambling, and we're committed to working with all stakeholders to help individuals and families dealing with this issue.

CCPG provides Connecticut's only 24-hour Problem Gambling Helpline – offering support via phone, live online chat, and text. We also implement prevention and education programs serving youth, active military and veterans, and priority populations.

Regarding current proposals calling for expansions of legalized gambling in the form of sports betting, I- lottery, and a new casino, we welcome the opportunity to work with you in ensuring that adequate protections are put in place to prevent harm and provide treatment to those who need it.

It is our recommendation that with any expansion the legislature enact the following responsible gaming principles to minimize harm and protect consumers:

- Dedicate funds to prevent and treat gambling addiction
- Require sports betting operators to implement responsible gaming programs, including comprehensive employee training, self-exclusion, the ability to set limits on time and money spent betting, and the inclusion of help and prevention messaging in marketing materials
- Assign a regulatory agency to enforce any regulations and requirements that are enacted
- Conduct surveys of the prevalence of problem gambling prior to expansion and at regular periods thereafter in order to monitor impacts and gather data to support evidence-based mitigation efforts
- Establish a consistent minimum age for sports gambling and related fantasy games

Everyone who profits from expanded legalized gambling bears responsibility for helping to mitigate any resulting gambling problems. We respectfully recommend that the equivalent of **2.5% of new revenue** from expanded legalized gambling be dedicated to problem gambling services in the State of

Connecticut. To maximize effective treatment and prevention, these funds should be dedicated to the Chronic Gamblers Treatment & Rehabilitation Account and be made available to state health agencies and private non-profits.

These monies will strengthen the safety net of prevention, treatment, and recovery by:

- Expanding statewide coverage of treatment programs. Bettor Choice Gambling Treatment Programs provide gambling-specific treatment services for people experiencing a gambling problem and persons affected (i.e., spouse, family members). Disordered Gambling Integration (DiGIn) Programs provide mental health and substance use specific services and are integrating gambling into their workplace environments. We propose funding an additional 10 DiGIn Programs and expanding coverage of Bettor Choice programs in North Central CT (where there currently are none) to provide treatment for individuals and family members impacted by the Springfield and proposed East Windsor casinos.
- Increasing prevention programs to provide education and awareness activities, as well as youth leadership training.
- Expanding culturally-relevant outreach and community awareness activities to priority populations.
- Ensuring uninterrupted operation of the statewide Problem Gambling Helpline and bolstering marketing and awareness efforts.
- Increasing criminal justice integration and awareness programming.
- Developing evidence-based, advanced level training for behavioral health professionals on best practices and emerging trends.

Currently, \$2.3M of the revenue received from the sale of lottery tickets and Keno, along with an additional \$200,000 Special Revenue funds from OTB and charitable gaming is transferred into the Chronic Gamblers Treatment & Rehabilitation Account (*Source: DCP Gaming Revenue statistics*). ***This amount is .007% of the FY18 \$353M contribution of the Lottery, OTB and charitable gaming revenue deposited into the General Fund.*** Currently, \$0 from the \$271M casino revenue is deposited into the Chronic Gamblers Treatment & Rehabilitation Account.

While the CCPG does not advocate for or against gambling, we feel that it is necessary to require reasonable regulations that will protect individuals from addiction issues that may be an unintended consequence of expanded legalized gambling. We are happy to work with all stakeholders to ensure that the safety net in Connecticut is strong enough to protect our citizens from these consequences.

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The Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG) is a non-profit organization focused on preventing problem gambling and helping those who may be impacted. CCPG provides Connecticut's only 24-hour Problem Gambling Helpline – offering support via phone, live online chat, and text. We also implement prevention and education programs serving youth, military/veterans, and priority populations.

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, call the Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-888-789-7777 or visit www.ccpg.org/chat for confidential help.