



**Connecticut Conference
United Church of Christ**

125 Sherman Street
Hartford, CT 06105-6004

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 5387:
An Act Concerning KENO**

**Submitted by the Reverend Kent Siladi, Connecticut Conference Minister, United Church of Christ
March 7, 2014**

Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan, and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee,

I am the Reverend Kent Siladi, Conference Minister for the Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ, and I am writing today in support of House Bill 5387: An Act Concerning Keno. I support repeal of the authorization of the Connecticut Lottery Corporation to introduce Keno in Connecticut.

I am writing on behalf of the 240 congregations and more than 75,000 people in our state's churches. In fact, the United Church of Christ (UCC) is the largest Protestant denomination in Connecticut. Nationally, the UCC has more than 5,700 congregations with nearly 1 million members.

Legalizing keno would increase the risk of gambling and problem gambling among minors. Children would be exposed to Keno gambling at dining tables in restaurants. Not only would minors closely watch their parents gamble, but parents may invite their children to participate, as has been observed in other states where keno is widespread in restaurants. This is the wrong message to send to our children. We want our children to make good decisions and healthy choices.

The Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ does not think Keno gambling is beneficial to the residents of Connecticut. Legalizing Keno would expand the number of places where this lottery product would be available in establishments that serve alcohol. Drinking alcohol while gambling is a toxic mix, contributing to the deterioration of judgment and control.

In Connecticut, electronic gambling is only available at the tribal casinos. If electronic gambling becomes available throughout the state, problem and underage gambling will increase, as it has in other communities in the United States and other countries. This highly addictive electronic gambling game could be introduced into as many as 3,000 sites.

There are many social, health, and economic costs related to keno. The latest research shows it is highly addictive, which could lead to broken families, crime, and bankruptcy. Legalized gambling hits low-income earners, retirees, and the unemployed the hardest: populations that are already hit by economic inequality. There is no justice in using addictive gambling machines to obtain revenue from the most vulnerable populations.

We therefore urge the Committee to support House Bill 5387 that, if adopted, would repeal the authorization of the Connecticut Lottery Corporation to introduce keno in Connecticut.

Thank you for all your work and for the opportunity to supply written testimony in support of House Bill 5387.

Blessings,
Reverend Kent Siladi

 **God is still speaking,**

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