

Testimony of Nicholas A. Yanicelli  
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**Testimony in Opposition to HB 7054 – An Act Concerning Keno**

Co-chairs Senator John Fonfara and Representative Jeffrey Berger; Ranking Members Senator Scott Frantz and Representative Christopher Davis; Vice-Chairs Senator Carlo Leone and Representative Roland Lemar; Senator Steve Casano, Senator Eric Coleman, Senator Toni Boucher, Senator Gary Winfield and Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today in opposition to HB 7054 – An Act Concerning Keno.

Keno, as you know is a lottery like game offered in some state lotteries and modern casinos and each operation sets its own series of payout choices, sometimes called paytables. For purposes of this discussion we will not focus on the odds of winning the various CT lotteries, but we should address that the “house” edge for Keno can range from 4% to well over 35%. The typical house edge for non-slot casino games is between 2% and 5%. This can be confirmed through a cursory search of the internet which will also confirm that there are hundreds of different kinds of paytables.

This form of gambling has the potential to prey on the most vulnerable in our society and exasperate an already bad situation As you may know, 90% of people incarcerated in CT suffer from a mental disorder or an addiction, be it drugs, alcohol or gambling, among the most prevalent. Research also confirms that 60% of those convicted are guilty of non-violent crimes. Keno is a bad bet for Connecticut and in some circles is characterized as a “misery tax “and/or “video crack”

Problem gambling leads to crime, debt, bankruptcies and broken homes and families. Is it really worth the risk to increase tax revenues in this way? Maybe we should collectively focus on a campaign to develop a broad based coalition of interests, primarily small businesses, to grow jobs. Maybe it is time to figure out what CT is doing right and reenergize efforts in those areas with less restrictions and business regulations conducive to growth while we discard the non-working elements. It costs Connecticut \$51,000 per year for each prison bed which puts us in the top 3 states where it costs more to imprison a felon than it does for a college education. Why are we focusing on a lottery like game to raise revenues at the risk of incarcerating more of our vulnerable citizens? Let me put it another way – over three years it costs over \$150,000 per offender. With that kind of money you could pay each of them \$20,000 per year, provide basic housing, and have enough money to train them and put them in a position to get a job and become taxpaying citizens. We do not need Keno to put this state on the right track!

Respectively

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