

CONNECTICUT COUNCIL on
**PROBLEM
GAMBLING**

16 West Main Street
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Public Testimony: Raised Bill No. 7054- An Act Concerning Keno

Date: April 14, 2015

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Presented To: Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

Good morning, Members of the Committee, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Tamara Petro, and I am the Director of the **CT Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG)**. Some may be familiar with us but the CT Council's **mission** is to reduce the prevalence and impact of problem and pathological (disordered) gambling on individuals, families, and society. To be clear, we take a neutral stance on legalized gambling, as an **affiliate** of the National Council on Problem Gambling in Washington, D.C.

We work in strong partnerships the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services-Problem Gambling Services (treatment programs and prevention services). We operate the **State Problem Gambling Helpline** for Problem Gamblers, **educate and train** on the risks of gambling, responsible gambling, **and refer people** to treatment and recovery services. We also **work in Partnerships with Connecticut's Gambling Industry** representatives, to co-create essential responsible gambling messages and activities to prevent and mitigate gambling problems.

We are not here to testify for nor against the existence of legal gambling. We **fully recognize** the economic concerns of some, and the autonomy of a business to conduct and market its business. We are here to represent the **Council's primary concerns**, and to be a **voice for the issues of prevention for problem gamblers and their families**, who must be considered when making legislative decisions on expanding gambling or locations. We are also here to **advocate for responsible gambling infusion in legislative language and potential implementation** of the bill. We also finally request that, (as it is worded currently in existing Sections of the Lottery's contribution to the Chronic Gamblers Treatment Fund pertaining to lottery ticket sales), there be **adequate and continued funding** for the existing, as named parties who work on Problem Gambling issues; i.e., State funded treatment and prevention, sub-regional action councils and non-profits, and the designated a percentage of the fund for the specific work of our Council. **All of our work grows** as the need to prevent and provide treatment and recovery services for problem gamblers and their families grows, as a product of gambling expansion.

We would like to point out that as a result of this bill, there also would be the **expansion into the range of the communities in CT and into specific segments of the population** who would be consumers of, or exposed to, this new form of gambling. Some studies report that with increased access, and associated with proximity, we can expect **problem gambling rates to increase with exposure** and access. There is where our desire to increase your awareness lies.

With Keno, there are some unique characteristics for special populations you may not be considering as well. We ask you to consider this in the context of ensuring responsible gambling protections and safeties and also increased funds for prevention work and treatment when I outline the following.

Providing keno in communities would potentially increase the risk of gambling and problem gambling among minors:

Children may be exposed to Keno gambling at restaurants with close proximity to bar activities, and with repetition due to the nature of the game. Parents may not yet aware of the risk of allowing children to see or potentially participate in playing Keno. **If there is any proximity of keno** at these types of locations in the newly raised bill, we would **require that protections and services including funding** be amplified if there were any gambling opportunity in family settings.

We also have **concerns about removal of language** from the original bill which would have prohibited interactive online games and video lottery for promotional purposes. This may **pose a risk particularly for youth** in this digital age. Again, we require protections.

This would also create new opportunities for exposure and temptations to gamble, for problem gamblers who are trying to stop, and for recovering gamblers who have already stopped:

Gamblers in recovery are already faced with a multitude of environmental challenges. Those in recovery or those wanting to stop gambling will have many distractions and will need extra protections and services as well.

There will be exposure to the pairing of gambling and alcohol in businesses where keno is played and alcohol is consumed:

With the legalization of Keno, it would also be **available in a number of public places where alcohol is also served**. Drinking alcohol while gambling increases risk for loss and gambling problems. Alcohol is **known to impair judgment** which may result in loss of control over gambling. This would require another level of considerations and protections as well.

Closing:

Current funding for problem and underage gambling services is insufficient for an expansion of legalized gambling. Increased gambling opportunities correlate to an increase in problem and underage gambling. Certain populations will need extra attention and services.

Again, I want to thank the Committee Chairs and the entire Committee for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the CT Council and those individuals and families for whom the CT Council advocates.