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Testimony before the Public Safety and Security Committee Opposing Bill No. 1090 on March 17, 2015.

Good afternoon Co-Chair Coleman, Representative Orange and committee members.

My name is Joanie Masot, I am here sharing my concerns on Bill No. 1090. I am not against or for gambling. I sit before you today as a recovering problem gambler. Over 10 years ago, I made horrible choices and decisions with my gambling that led my son who was 9 years old at the time and is now 20 and my family and myself down a path of destruction. In short, my problem gambling addiction led me to prison, losing my home, my 16 yr. marriage and almost losing my son, say nothing of the shame and guilt. I was a casino gambler who began the journey with playing bingo very innocently and before long I was not be able to leave the casino for days when I went there. (Although, if I wasn't able to get to the casino, I found many other ways to get my high, such as instant tickets, OTB's, etc.). It didn't matter if I was winning or losing, I didn't leave until I had not a dollar in my pocket.

I went to the extreme as is common with a problem gambler, to embezzle from my employer and used the funds to gamble. I went to prison for that crime, lost most of my family, attempted suicide and was hopeless.

Once, I was able to come to the reality that I had a huge gambling problem and knew there was no other choice to turn my life around or my son would be attending to my funeral. I reached out for help with the programs and support in our state and I was able to begin treatment and therapy which I did for many years.

I ask you please to factor in while considering this bill to have funds set aside right from the beginning to fund Advocacy, Peer Support and treatment for our State. This is a must for our problem gambling people in Connecticut. Without the Advocacy, Peer Support and Treatment we are only setting ourselves up for increased successful suicides, more embezzlements and crimes, and many hopeless citizens.

I am proud to tell you today my recovery is strong today because of the Peer Support and Advocacy. Without this I would not be sitting here today as I would not be alive. I am a law abiding citizen, a registered voter and the Mom I am supposed to be to my son. I have my family back in my life and I have a wonderful supportive husband today. I also am very blessed and fortunate to be an employee of Advocacy Unlimited. I am also a State of CT certified Recovery Support Specialist.

Thank you for allowing me to share my testimony with you today.