



**Testimony of Marlene F McGann, Executive Director
South Central CT Substance Abuse Council
concerning expansion of gaming in CT**

S.B. 1090 An Act Concerning Gaming

Senator Larson, Representative Dargan, Senator Coleman, Representative Verrengia and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee my name is Marlene F McGann, the Executive Director of the South Central CT Substance Abuse Council, one of 13 regional action councils (RACs) on substance abuse and addiction and a member of the CT Prevention Network of RACs. I am offering testimony concerning the proposed expansion of gaming venues in CT.

Regional Action Councils work directly with the DMHAS Problem Gambling Services Unit in every CT municipality to assess the need for treatment services, raise community awareness of problem gambling, and educate youth and families about problem gambling resources. RACs currently bring together five regional teams of prevention, intervention and treatment specialists and community members to address the issues concerning problem gambling across the continuum of care. What we have found is that while the state has 14 Bettor Choice treatment programs and a Helpline (all funded through PGS) these resources are underfunded and will be additionally stressed should gambling become more accessible to the vulnerable populations who are at risk for problem gambling including persons in recovery, youth and seniors. Regional Team members consistently relate that while social gambling is not a danger for most community members, it is devastating to the families and employers who must contend with a problem gambler. For each person with a gambling addiction, a minimum of eight people are directly and seriously affected. Research has also shown that of the persons who attempt or complete suicide, problem gambling has a higher rate than any other addiction or illness.

In your deliberations on gambling venues and activities in our State, I would ask that you consider the impact that problem gambling already has on our citizens who are addicted to gambling and their families, and the impact that additional gaming opportunities may have our communities.

I would ask that should gaming be expanded, the Legislature seriously consider increasing funding to DMHAS Problem Gambling Services to:

- Conduct a statewide survey and research concerning the impact of gambling in CT
- Expand treatment options with special consideration to identified populations
- Increase initiatives that minimize the harm that may come from gambling for those persons who choose to gamble
- Increase advertising of treatment services and resources for gamblers and their families which has shown an increase in calls for assistance to the CT Helpline when advertising campaigns have been conducted
- Support the development of a Responsible Gaming Framework based on the work done in Massachusetts that supports "minimizing the harm from gambling to individuals, families, and communities" while still serving the interests of the state and gaming licensees.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Marlene F McGann, MSCJ

South Central CT Substance Abuse Council serving the communities of Branford, East Haven, Hamden, Guilford, Madison, Meriden, North Branford, North Haven, Wallingford

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