



**Connecticut Conference  
United Church of Christ**

125 Sherman Street  
Hartford, CT 06105-6004

**Testimony for House Bill 5577:**

**An Act Requiring the Evaluation of the Costs and Benefits of Establishing Certain Commercial Gaming  
within the State of Connecticut**

**Submitted by Michele Mudrick, Legislative Advocate  
Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ  
March 10, 2016**

Senator Hartley, Representative Perone and distinguished members of the Commerce Committee,

I am Michele Mudrick, Legislative Advocate for the Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ, and I am writing today regarding H.B. 5577, An Act Requiring the Evaluation of the Costs and Benefits of Establishing Certain Commercial Gaming Within the State of Connecticut. We are in support of requiring the Office of Policy and Management, in consultation with the Department of Consumer Protection, to conduct a study evaluating the costs and benefits of authorizing and licensing a commercial gaming facility within the state, provided that the study include the social, economic, and public health costs and is done by a truly independent source with no history of receiving financial payment from any interested party.

I am writing on behalf of the 235 congregations and more than 67,500 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. In 1977, 1979, and again in 1994, assembled delegates and ministers of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ met and voted on Resolutions which call upon the Connecticut Conference to oppose expanded gambling.

The Institute for American Values published a report called "Why Casinos Matter: Thirty-One Evidence-Based Propositions from the Health and Social Sciences." This report was created by the Council on Casinos, an independent nonpartisan group of scholars and leaders who joined to examine the role of casinos in American life and to foster informed citizen debate on gambling as a public policy.<sup>1</sup> Here is the link to the report: <http://stoppredatorygambling.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2013-Why-Casinos-Matter-FINAL.pdf> I would highly encourage all Connecticut legislators to read this exceptionally well researched report.

This report's research shows that gambling is highly addictive, that casinos depend on problem gamblers for their revenue, that living close to a casino increases your chance of becoming a problem gambler, that the benefits of casinos are short-term and easy to measure while many of the costs are longer-term and harder to measure, and that casinos weaken nearby businesses, hurt property values, increase the risk of broken families, and increase crime and bankruptcy in communities.

Gambling losses contribute to economic inequality. Legalized gambling hits low-income earners, retirees, the mentally ill, and the unemployed the hardest: populations that are already suffering from

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<sup>1</sup> Institute for American Values

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economic inequality. There is no justice in using addictive gambling machines to obtain revenue from these most vulnerable populations.

A study conducted by an independent source is the right thing to do. It is what the residents of Connecticut deserve. We therefore urge the Committee to do what is right: have this study performed by an independent entity that will examine all the social, economic and public health costs of another casino in our small state.

Thank you for your work and the opportunity to supply written testimony in support of H.B. 5577.

Many blessings,  
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