



## *Family Institute of Connecticut ACTION*

### Testimony in Support of House Bill 5577, “An Act Requiring an Evaluation of the Costs and Benefits of Establishing Certain Commercial Gaming within the State of Connecticut”

March 9, 2016

Dear members of the Commerce Committee:

We are pleased that the Committee is taking a deliberative approach to the call for a new casino to be built in Connecticut. We support a thorough cost-benefit analysis and encourage the passage of this bill.

Our testimony concurs with that of Michele Mudrick of the United Church of Christ, Connecticut Conference. In her testimony, Ms. Mudrick cited a publication by the non-partisan Institute for American Values, titled “Why Casinos Matter: Thirty-One Evidence-Based Propositions from the Health and Social Sciences”<sup>1</sup>. According to that report, there is a lack of independent research on casino gambling in the United States, relative to other countries; most research has been funded by the industry itself. Perhaps the state of Connecticut can lead the way in filling this gap.

We are concerned about the potential impact of a new casino on Connecticut families. While we sympathize with the desire to remain competitive with other states and to find revenue and employment streams in a challenging economy, we believe this is ultimately a “quick fix” that will not bring lasting economic stability and could have a detrimental effect on society that will cancel out any gains – and that an impartial study will reveal this.

What research there is indicates that modern casino gambling is designed to keep people playing – and losing. Intermittent small payoffs at slot machines keep low rollers hooked, and the computer system analyzes gamblers' behavior. The game is rigged against winning in the long term. Gambling addiction, then, appears less as a failure of individual willpower and more as a predictable outcome of this design, on which the whole business model depends.

“Why Casinos Matter” explains well the financial and social devastation of problem gambling, including home loss, divorce, suicide, even neglect of children.

We question the economic wisdom of having *four* casinos (counting Springfield MGM and a proposed casino in the Hartford area) all within such a short distance of each other. In January, Stockton University economists told *New Jersey On-Line* that there is a “shrinking customer base and a saturated market” in the Northeast<sup>2</sup>. Also, we wonder if a new casino would bring quality jobs versus low-wage, part-time jobs without benefits that may even negatively affect the health of the workers. In the same *New Jersey On-Line* article, experts who interviewed casino employees found that “pretty much everyone agreed that they would not recommend casino jobs for the children, their nieces and nephews these days, particularly because they are no longer full-time jobs. They no longer have regular hours.”

Any increase in jobs or revenue from a new casino will have to be weighed against the toll of negatives like gambling addiction, which our social services will have to absorb somehow – although, of course, the personal suffering of affected individuals and families cannot adequately quantified in a dollar amount.

This is why the study bill is needed. We recommend the entire report “Why Casinos Matter” and thank the Committee for considering the issues it raises, which we have only briefly covered here.

Respectfully,

**Nicole Stacy**  
**Public Policy Assistant**  
**Family Institute of Connecticut ACTION**

1. <http://www.americanvalues.org/search/item.php?id=1981>
2. [http://www.nj.com/jjournal-news/index.ssf/2016/02/experts\\_urge\\_caution\\_on\\_expand.html](http://www.nj.com/jjournal-news/index.ssf/2016/02/experts_urge_caution_on_expand.html)