

CONNECTICUT COUNCIL on
**PROBLEM
GAMBLING**

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To: Chairman Larson, Chairman Dargan, and Distinguished Members of The Public Safety and Security Committee

From: Tamara Petro, MPH, Executive Director; The Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling

On: SB 358, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PURCHASE OF LOTTERY TICKETS

Greetings to the Members of the Committee. My name is Tamara Petro, and I am the Director of the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG). The Council's mission is to reduce the prevalence and impact of problem and disordered gambling on individuals, families, and society. As an affiliate of the National Council on Problem Gambling, we are neither for nor against legalized gambling. We are here to represent the Council's main concerns, and to be a voice for the issues of prevention for problem gamblers and their families. Protection of these persons and particularly for vulnerable groups, including youth and young adults, must be considered to be a responsibility of the State when making legislative decisions, and particularly as we look to expand gambling which is an activity with much risk.

We are neutral in the legalization of gambling, but we are concerned about the casual introduction of a third party lottery management service company. Connecticut statute currently allows and also restricts certain activities regarding consumer protections. This new proposal seemingly tags onto current lottery legislation with minor additions and deletions, but severely changes the gambling landscape in doing so. With online gambling comes a gamut of consumer safety issues that are not addressed by this simple tag-on language.

Our specific concerns are as follows:

- The creation of legalized online gambling presents a very high risk of creating compulsive and addictive disorders for those who play. This is particularly a danger for vulnerable persons such as youth, or those who may be gambling solitarily, which is a risk to compulsive playing and thus gambling problems. This would also be challenging to persons in recovery, to be exposed to another gambling opportunity now whether at home, or in their hands, on a mobile device.
- This could potentially lead to the expansion of online gambling as a whole in the State, if the statutes prevent the lottery from doing so now were then stricken from the legislation as the bill proposes, other competitors would approach the legislature in time. Fantasy and Online Sports betting may be the next in line.
- This also would present a severe concern for effective age verification for minors. A minor with an adult's credit card, social security number and birthdate would be able to purchase tickets, whereas now in Connecticut the age verification occurs visibly, in person, and is enforceable.

Our National Council has created Internet Responsible Gambling Standards (Found at www.ncpgambling.org) for the online gambling industry. These standards are inclusive of (but not exclusive to): Player education, play management and game settings, the integrity of player transactions, Voluntary Self-Exclusion, truthful advertising, and Responsible Gambling and intervention information. These programs cannot be addressed to the extent they deserve as this bill slides lottery management into the current lottery activities, without distinguishing the online practices which call for different measures and safeties.

As the Council has also twice testified recently, under the General Law Committee, we are already advocating for the establishment of a Responsible Gambling Advisory Council under the Department of Consumer Protection, to better inform responsible gambling standards, practices, studies and programs statewide. The Council would include our CT Council on Problem Gambling and key state departments that represent affected populations for gambling disorder, and would be able to inform any further gambling related decision making and public programs that have an impact on public safety.

An expansion of gambling by introducing online gambling could correlate to an increase in problem and underage gambling in Connecticut. According to the National Council on Problem Gambling, the current prevalence rate for disordered and problem gambling is 1-2.2% for adults, and for youth it is 4-6%. If this bill moves forward, we ask the legislature to ensure protections and standards be enacted proactively to prevent and mitigate gambling addiction and its sequelae.

Thank you to Committee Chairs and the entire Committee for your consideration of this matter.

Responsible Gambling Advisory Council.

(a) There is established, within the Department of Consumer Protection, a Responsible Gambling Advisory Council which shall consist of the following Seventeen (17) members

- Two members who shall be the designee of the Governor
- Two members who shall be the designee of the Commissioner of Consumer Protection
- One member who shall be the designee of the Senate President Pro Tempore
- One member who shall be the designee of the Senate Minority Leader
- One member who shall be the designee of the Speaker of the House
- One member who shall be the designee of the House Minority Leader
- One member who shall be the designee of the Commissioner on Aging
- One member who shall be the designee of the Commissioner of Children and Families
- One member who shall be the designee of the Commissioner of Corrections
- One member who shall be the designee of the Commissioner of DMHAS
- One member who shall be the designee of the Commissioner of Public Health
- One member who shall be the designee of the CT Council on Problem Gambling.
- One member who shall be the designee of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe
- One member who shall be the designee of the Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut

The Commissioner of the Department of Consumer Protection shall appoint a Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson from among the members of the council. Members shall serve for a term of three years or until their successors are appointed, whichever is later. Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority for the position which has become vacant. Members of the council shall not be compensated for their services.

Any council member who fails to attend three consecutive meetings or who fails to attend fifty per cent of all meetings held during any calendar year shall be deemed to have resigned from office.

(b) The advisory council shall:

- meet monthly, and at other times at the call of the Chairperson
- promote Responsible Gambling awareness, education, and prevention
- implement programs and services to improve responsible gambling practices,
- Monitor Responsible Gambling practices as impacted by legalized gambling in the state,
- study additional issues and from time to time issue reports on matters related to responsible gambling

(c) The Responsible Gambling Advisory Council shall establish a program for the promotion of responsible gambling in the state. The program shall provide prevention and educational services designed to increase awareness of and reduce the prevalence of problem gambling. The Commissioner of the Department of Consumer Protection may enter into agreements with nonprofit organizations to assist in providing the program of services as established by the Council, provided not less than thirty-five percent of the amount received pursuant to subsection (e) of this section shall be set aside for a contract with the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling.

(d) The CT Council on Problem Gambling shall provide administrative and operational support services to the the Responsible Gambling Advisory Council.

(e) The program established by subsection (c) of this section shall be funded by a portion of the 5% of the Chronic Gamblers Fund already allocated to the CT Council on Problem Gambling.