

CONNECTICUT COUNCIL on
**PROBLEM
GAMBLING**

16 West Main Street
Clinton, CT 06413

To: Co-Chairs Hartley and Perone and Other Distinguished Members of The Commerce Committee

From: Tamara Petro, M.P.H., Executive Director, The Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling

On: RAISED BILL 5577, AN ACT REQUIRING THE EVALUATION OF THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF ESTABLISHING CERTAIN COMMERCIAL GAMING WITHIN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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, which we feel 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 concerned about the introduction of this particular proposed economic study which we feel is intentionally timed and narrow in focus. We and other stakeholders had testified on numerous occasions to the legislature about a recommendation to expedite the currently mandated Gambling Impact study for Connecticut gaming, which we proposed should have been a responsibility of the state to assess such impacts prior to legislating any additional gambling whatsoever. The last study was conducted by Spectrum Gaming Group (2009), entitled *Gambling in Connecticut, Analyzing the Economic and Social Impacts*. The next study is mandated to occur at least every ten years, which would be 2018. Appropriations were already specifically authorized by the General Assembly to cover the cost.

Sec. 12-564...

(b) The commissioner (of the Department of Consumer Protection) shall conduct studies concerning the effect of legalized gambling on the citizens of this state including, but not limited to, studies to determine the types of gambling activity engaged in by the public and the desirability of expanding, maintaining or reducing the amount of legalized gambling permitted in this state. Such studies shall be conducted as often as the commissioner deems necessary, except that no studies shall be conducted before the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009, and thereafter studies shall be conducted at least once every ten years. The joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to legalized gambling shall each receive a report concerning each study carried out, stating the findings of the study and the costs of conducting the study.

If another, and solely economic study were to be required now at this time, we have concerns that:

1. The focus would be strictly economic from a jobs perspective and not have any inquiry as to the impact on other social and health indicators, namely what we are concerned with, which is the status of problem gambling in Connecticut.

2. We have concerns that if this study is commenced, either that the funding possibly would not exist to conduct the fuller impact study in two more years, and/or this new proposed gaming study with a solely economic focus would supercede the impact study, which would glance over what we advocate to be a very important part of gaming expansion decisions, which is the personal and societal cost and benefit impact.
3. We had requested that a fuller study be conducted prior to new legislation and this has not yet happened. Again, we feel that a proper study would include the social and health costs, not just an economic analysis. To note, in the field of problem gambling studies, there is well documented financial impact from *problem gambling* upon local communities and businesses.
4. There were flaws that were publicly expressed by our Council and others regarding the methodology and the agent of the study that was published in 2009. We feel that our Council and the State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services-Problem Gambling Services, and local research experts should be involved in informing that process when repeated. We also feel that other Committees may be concerned or should be involved (i.e., Public Safety).

As the Council has also provided testimony recently, in person under the General Law Committee, and in writing to the Public Safety and Security Committee, we are already advocating for the establishment of a Responsible Gambling Advisory Council under the Department of Consumer Protection, in attempts to provide support to the department and to better inform responsible gambling standards, practices, studies and programs statewide. The Advisory 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 properly inform any further gambling-related decision making and public programs that have an impact on public safety.

We ask the legislature to consider that any such study of gaming include relevancy to the subject area and populations it would be affecting while looking to the creation of economic opportunities for the state and local communities.

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.