

3/9/17

Dear Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Patricia Lang, residing at 27 DaCosta Drive, Newington, CT

I am writing to oppose both S.B. 957: An Act Concerning the Regulation of Gaming and the Authorization of a Casino Gaming Facility in The State and H.B.7239: An Act Providing for the Regulation of Gaming to Protect Public Safety and a Competitive Process to Issue a Gaming License.

On February 23, Rep. Verrengia described the Public Safety Committee casino forum that morning as an opportunity "to get feedback from all the stakeholders and put all the options on the table," but defined the stakeholders as simply MMCT, MGM, the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation, the Golden Hill Paugussets, Sportech, and Ravosa.

It sounded as though the issue was simply who should build the next casino and where it should be built, and ignored the largest group of stakeholders of all: the public, including the millions of CT residents represented by the Coalition Against the Expansion of Casino Gambling in CT of which I am a member. We were prohibited from speaking by the Public Safety and Security Committee. We wanted to provide the latest information on why the economic and social costs of legalizing commercial casino gambling in Connecticut would be far greater than the benefits.

One of the Committee persons brought up the subject of the current lawsuits by competitors of MMCT (Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun) regarding the exclusivity that would be given to them in building this casino. They asked if MMCT would absorb the costs of these lawsuits. Their reply was "that's an odd question". I couldn't believe my ears. This anything but an "odd" question. They did not commit to paying for these lawsuits.

I would like to get personal at this point. I have two stepchildren that have been personally affected by the compulsive gambling of their mother. This includes but was not limited to:

- declaring personal bankruptcy
- losing her home
- staying one step ahead of eviction by moving from apartment to apartment
- taking money awarded to them and spending it herself
- asking to borrow money from them
- losing the respect of her children

The proposed casino would not be the large area entertainment complexes that exist in eastern Connecticut where you can bring your children and grandchildren to events like basketball games and a museum. They would only for gambling and cater to the many who cannot afford to gamble.

Ironically, March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month (See the Department of Mental Website) and here we are adding to the problem. Once again, trying to balance the budget on the backs of the poor and mentally ill, as compulsive gambling is considered a mental illness by the Connecticut State Mental Health Services.

The East Windsor Town Council did not even have the courtesy of holding a referendum on the subject so that all their residents make their feelings known about having this casino in their town and the harmful effect it would have on their community. East Windsor and all nearby towns should be instructed to hold a referendum before any vote is held in the General Assembly.

Thank you for the opportunity to hear my statement.