



**WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DIANA GOODE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CONNECTICUT COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING
PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

S.B. No. 146 (COMM) AN ACT AUTHORIZING SPORTS WAGERING, ONLINE CASINO GAMING, ONLINE LOTTERY AND ONLINE KENO.

Proposed S.B. No. 570 AN ACT AUTHORIZING A TRIBAL RESORT-CASINO IN BRIDGEPORT, SPORTS WAGERING, INTERNET GAMING AND INTERNET LOTTERY.

H.B. No. 6451 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING GAMING AGREEMENTS WITH THE MASHANTUCKET PEQUOT TRIBE AND THE MOHEGAN TRIBE OF INDIANS OF CONNECTICUT.

H.B. No. 6512 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CONSUMER PROTECTIONS FOR SPORTS WAGERING.

Sen. Bradley, Rep. Horn, and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these bills concerning the potential expansion of gaming in our state. My name is Diana Goode, Executive Director of the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG). It is important to bring attention to the fact that CCPG does not advocate for or against gambling but is committed to working with all stakeholders to help individuals and families struggling from disordered gambling, as well as persons affected.

There are many positive factors that go into the expansion of gaming and we are sure that several of the other testifiers will fully explain those benefits to the state. However, it is important to understand that problem gambling affects real people and their families. Approximately 1% of US adults are estimated to meet the criteria for severe gambling problems each year. While 2-3% would be considered to have mild or moderate gambling problems. Currently Connecticut has over 3,500,000 citizens.

Statistically speaking, that means that over 100,000 citizens and over 275,000 family members are impacted by problem gambling disorders every day. Using current population models, problem gambling directly affects 735 individuals and 1,911 family members in each House district and 3,056 individuals and 7,946 family members in each Senate district. Any expansion in gambling would only see those numbers further rise.

Those affected by problem gambling are more susceptible to actions potentially resulting in crime, bankruptcy, lost productivity, and the increased need for social services. Problem gambling is also increasing at an alarming rate among our youth, due in part to the increasingly blurred lines between videogaming and gambling.

Clearly, it is both the moral and responsible choice to put policies in place in order to help those that will inevitably be affected by problem gambling before the expansion of gaming. In this regard, being proactive rather than reactive will pay significant dividends in helping to alleviate the suffering and hardships that some of your constituents will face.

CCPG recommends the following actions be considered as part of a larger Problem Gambling Safety Net:

Ensure that any expansion of gambling includes dedicated funds to prevent and treat gambling addiction. We respectfully recommend that 1-3% of revenue from expanded legalized gambling, including sports betting, online casino games, online lottery games, and any casino expansions, be dedicated to problem gambling services. This is new revenue so there is no reason not to dedicate a small portion of it to protect our citizens who suffer from disordered gambling with prevention, treatment, and recovery programs. To maximize effective treatment and prevention, these funds must be dedicated to the Chronic Gamblers Treatment & Rehabilitation Account and should be made available to state health agencies and private non-profits.

We would also ask that 10% of revenues that are deposited into the Chronic Gamblers Treatment & Rehabilitation Account be dedicated to the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling's prevention efforts. Our organization focuses on advocacy, education, and prevention. We offer Connecticut's only 24-hour Problem Gambling Helpline – offering support via phone, live online chat, and text. With the majority of the proposed gaming expansion being towards online platforms, CCPG will have to expand its current operations and educational and outreach campaigns in order to meet the needs of those that will be affected.

Require all betting operators to implement responsible gaming programs. This includes comprehensive employee training, self-exclusion, ability to set limits on time and money spent betting, and specific requirements for the inclusion of help/prevention messages in external marketing. We believe that HB 6512, **AN ACT CONCERNING CONSUMER PROTECTIONS FOR SPORTS WAGERING** is very much on the right track. The only addition that we would suggest is to have advocates from the Problem Gambling Community involved in the online platform development stage to ensure those factors are considered during the initial designs. Also, we would like to see those consumer protections outlined in the bill expanded from just sports wagering and become standardized for all gambling related operations.

Assign a regulatory agency to enforce the regulations and requirements that are enacted. We are happy to see that several of the bills have designated the CT Department of Consumer Protection as the agency responsible for regulatory oversight of the new expanded offerings. However, the agency can only be successful in their efforts if they are given the appropriate resources and staffing levels in order to achieve the new responsibilities that these bills seek to give them.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to speak before this committee today. I am available to answer any questions that the members may have.

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The Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG) is a non-profit organization focused on preventing problem gambling and helping those who may be impacted. CCPG does not advocate for or against gambling but is committed to working with all stakeholders to help individuals and families dealing with this issue.

CCPG provides Connecticut's only 24-hour Problem Gambling Helpline – offering support via phone, live online chat, and text. We also implement prevention and education programs serving schools, veterans, and at-risk populations.

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, call the Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-888-789-7777 or visit www.ccp.org/chat for confidential help.