

# Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-7215

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING PROBLEM GAMING.

**Vote Date:** 3/27/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/17/2025

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

The Public Health Committee.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill requires the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) to create a program for individuals and families in the state impacted by internet gaming disorder. The program must provide prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation services. Internet gaming disorder is defined as a disorder in which someone is chronically and progressively preoccupied with videogames and the urge to play, and shows behavior that compromises or harms personal, family, or vocational pursuits.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

### **Nancy Navaretta, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services (DMHAS):**

Commissioner Navaretta points out that internet gaming disorder is not an officially recognized diagnosis but has been classified as a “condition for further study”, by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and requiring more research. DMHAS is very interested in continuing to monitor the progression of this research, but believes it is currently premature to fully develop a program without clear clinical standards or official recognition in the broader behavioral health field. However, since there would be significant costs associated with such a program that are not in the Governor's proposed budget, the department cannot support the bill this year.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Pam Mautte, President, Connecticut Prevention Network:**

The increasing accessibility of online gaming, often paired with monetary incentives and social reinforcement, has led to a rise in problematic gaming behaviors, particularly among our youth and young adults. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) has recognized internet gaming disorder as a condition warranting further study. Connecticut lacks a structured, statewide program dedicated to addressing internet gaming disorder. This bill is a crucial step ensuring that individuals and families have access to evidence-based treatment, counseling, and support services.

### **David Ruela, CPS, Program Coordinator, Amplify:**

Treatment providers continue to recognize the need for more prevention efforts, not just for substance abuse, but for behavioral addiction to gambling. By investing in research and education on internet gaming disorder, we can help create a healthier community and mitigate the long-term risks associated with problem gaming disorders.

### **Brailee Whan, Prevention Specialist in Problem Gambling:**

Video gaming is part of everyday life for millions of Americans. While video games offer many positive experiences, we also know that, for some, they can lead to problematic behavior, especially when gambling features are included. The potential mental health impacts on young adults makes it crucial that Connecticut takes action to address internet gaming disorder, a condition that can have serious consequences for individuals and families. While prevention is a key component, it must be complemented by a robust treatment system to effectively address this issue.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

### **Oz Mane:**

Mr. Mane is concerned about the excessive regulatory control exercised by government in this bill.

### **James Garrett:**

Mr. Garrett believes if you have a problem with gambling, then don't do it. He believes this represents government overreach.

**Reported by: Dave Rackliffe, Asst. Clerk**

**Date: March 31, 2025**