



WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DIANA GOODE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CONNECTICUT COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Friday, March 04, 2022

H.B. No. 5285 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM.

Sen. McCrory, Rep. Sanchez and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill concerning the public-school curriculum. My name is Diana Goode, Executive Director of the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG).

Connecticut has approximately 3,565,000 citizens. That means that over 100,000 citizens and over 275,000 family members are negatively impacted by gambling every day. Using current population models, gambling related problems 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.

The recent expansion of gambling last fall and the inescapable surge of advertising for it, has changed the landscape of our state. The new online offerings, especially, with sports betting, has engaged many new people towards the gambling platforms that would be considerably less likely to frequent a brick-and-mortar establishment. We feel that it is a necessity to start to have a serious dialogue with the youth in our state at the middle and high school levels. The purpose of educating students is to prevent additional people from developing gambling related problems and provide them with the necessary tools for prevention beforehand including understanding risk and protective factors, warning signs and the impacts of gambling related harms.

In a 2019 study of 28,000 Connecticut high schoolers, conducted from 2015-2018, from SERAC on Gambling Behavior and Substance Use found:

- 17% of students reported gambling in the past year
- 26% of students have tried to cut back
- 7% have missed school or other important activities due to gambling
- 12% reported family members expressing concerns about their gambling
- 7% of students have reported experiences problem gambling amongst family members

We have had calls to our Helpline from many that aren't old enough to legally gamble yet are now beginning to show signs that gambling is becoming problematic. Sports betting and fantasy contests especially seem to be where many teens have been having issues.

With the mainstreaming of professional gaming becoming prevalent with youth viewing gaming content on Twitch and through other E-Sports leagues, we are seeing a lot of youth suffering from many of the same indicators that show a gambling problem. The addition of micro-transactions, pay-to-play models, and 24/7 virtual worlds are causing many to spend significantly more money than the initial game purchase and spend much more time than they would just playing a game's main story line.

Lastly, crypto-currencies and crowd sourced stock trades are now becoming much more prevalent and easier to access. Resembling the pump and dump models of old, message boards and celebrity endorsements are causing many that do not have the disposable income to use their funds on these transactions not based on sound business fundamentals but on pure speculation, hype, and a sense of community. As a matter of fact, many posters actually celebrate their losses and indicate an unwillingness to sell their position regardless of the movement of the financial instruments. Many of these behaviors also mirror what we see in those impacted by problem gambling.

Unfortunately, we have seen time and time again people and their families that are impacted by gambling related harms. Marriages destroyed, employment lost, retirements and educational funds exhausted, and insurmountable credit card debt. We need to be proactive and educate our youth about these issues in the same way we are educating them about substance misuse and mental health, so they have the preventative tools to make better decisions that can protect themselves.

We ask for substitute language to be considered for this bill addressing some of the issues that we have outlined in our state's public-school curriculum.

Thank you and we are always available to answers any questions.

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The Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG) is a non-profit organization focused on preventing gambling related harm 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 other 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.