



**WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DIANA GOODE**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**CONNECTICUT COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING**

**GENERAL LAW COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, March 08, 2022**

***H.B. No. 5329 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CANNABIS TRANSFERS, CANNABIS ADVERTISEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL CONCERNING CANNABIS.***

Sen. Maroney, Rep. D'Agostino and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill concerning cannabis advertisements. My name is Diana Goode, Executive Director of the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG). While our organization doesn't have any involvement in the cannabis industry directly, statistics do show that 38% of people experiencing gambling problems have also had a substance use problem. Additionally, of those impacted by gambling disorder, those that had a substance use problem had a marked increase in suicidal behaviors.

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 would be a great benefit to youth in this state to extend the same advertising protections of youth from cannabis, outlined in Sec. 6, to include gambling advertising.

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

The numbers outlined above were from before the expansion of online gambling, so you can imagine how much more of an impact some of the predatory advertisements offering risk-free bets are having.

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. The increase in marketing normalizes and glorifies the behavior causing a decrease in the perception of harm, especially to youth who are more likely to participate.

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 protect our youth from gambling related harms in the same way we are protecting them from predatory or misleading advertisements regarding alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

We ask for substitute language to be considered for this bill addressing some of the issues that we have outlined.

Thank you for your consideration 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](http://www.ccp.org/chat) for confidential help.