



WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DIANA GOODE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CONNECTICUT COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

BANKING COMMITTEE

Friday, February 10, 2023

H.B. No. 6318 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PAUSING OF DEBT OBLIGATIONS BY INDIVIDUALS IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT PROGRAMS.

Sen. Miller, Rep. Doucette, and Members of the Committee: My name is Diana Goode, Executive Director of the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG). Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill to pause the debt obligations by individuals in substance use treatment programs. We would respectfully ask for substitute language to be considered to include those individuals suffering from gambling related harm that are in gambling treatment programs.

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 affect 735 individuals and 1,911 family members in each House district and 3,056 individuals and 7,946 family members in each Senate district.

In the American Psychiatric Association's "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5)", gambling disorder is included in the "Substance-Related and Addictive Disorder" category, along with substance use disorder. While symptoms and biology of those impacted by gambling addiction are similar to those impacted by substance use or alcohol, brain scans of those suffering from gambling disorder, when gambling, show that corresponding brain imaging is similar for "near wins" as it is for actual wins making gambling arguably more addictive. Combined with the lack of outward physical symptoms, you can understand how those impacted can often hide their behaviors from even their closest friends and family members for prolonged periods of time. Unfortunately, for many, it is only revealed after suffering significant financial calamity.

Many in gambling treatment programs have creditors seeking to be compensated for debts. If this bill were to include individuals and close family members being able to temporarily cease the constant barrage of debt collectors during their initial recovery, we feel it would be a strong tool to help many stay the course in their treatment to get on the long, lifetime journey of being in recovery.

While the CCPG does not advocate for or against gambling, we feel that it is necessary to ensure that the state has a robust problem gambling safety net to help those individuals and families impacted by problem gambling and to reduce harm. We believe this policy can be a great new tool to help providers

in enrolling and maintaining those impacted by gambling harm into the treatment programs from which they clearly can benefit.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and please feel free to contact our organization if we can be of service to you or your constituents.

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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.