



WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DIANA GOODE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CONNECTICUT COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

Wednesday, February 22, 2023

H.B. No. 6600 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR REGIONAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ACTION ORGANIZATIONS.

Sen. Anwar, Rep. McCarthy Vahey, and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill concerning funding for the Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations. My name is Diana Goode, Executive Director of the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG). Our organization wholeheartedly supports this bill. The RHBAO's have been an essential partner in our mission of connecting those impacted by gambling related harms to services and resources that can help those individuals and their families.

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.

The structure of the RHBAOs, where mental health, substance misuse, and problem gambling resources are combined in one organization, allows for the flexibility to recognize that many people do not suffer from any one affliction alone, but often a combination. 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.

The expansion of online gambling and the inescapable surge of advertising for it has changed the landscape of our state. Online gambling, especially 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 vital investment for the state to have a robust problem gambling safety net and RHBAOs are instrumental in the net being effective.

Thank you for your consideration and we are always available to answer 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.