



**WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DIANA GOODE**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**CONNECTICUT COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING**

**COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN**

**Thursday, February 16, 2023**

***H.B. No. 6641 AN ACT REQUIRING PROOF OF AGE FOR PURCHASE OF LOTTERY TICKETS.***

Sen. Maher, Rep. Linehan, 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 require proof of age for purchase of lottery tickets. This bill would help protect our youth by establishing the same protections that are currently in place for the sale of alcohol or tobacco products.

Youth gambling is a problem that does not get the attention that it deserves. Many kids gamble for the first time between 9 and 11 years old. In many cases it is a lottery ticket that is given as a holiday gift. This is one of the reasons that we are grateful for the yearly holiday campaign conducted by the Connecticut Lottery Corporation to give a kid a toy not a ticket. Kids that are exposed to gambling early are 4 times more likely to develop a gambling problem.

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 experiencing problem gambling among family members.

We have had calls to our Helpline from teenagers that aren't old enough to legally gamble. They are not mature enough to gamble responsibly and do not know where to turn when they spend too much, or worse take money from family members. Teens are exposed every day to advertising for sports betting and fantasy contests and gambling among peers is common. Currently, prevention and education programs for youth are just beginning to catch up to the expansion of online gambling available in our state.

For this reason, we ask that the committee consider substitute language enabling certified gambling counselors to speak with kids that are 16 and over without the need for parental consent. Too often we are unable to help certain kids because our state programs that support gambling counseling are limited

to serving those 18 and over. Therefore, the parent must enter treatment with the teen in order for them to get help. Otherwise, there are no avenues to provide them with treatment or referrals or for them to sign up for the state's voluntary self-exclusion list without parental involvement.

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 helping to prevent lottery tickets from getting into the hands of those under the legal age to purchase them and by allowing 16- and 17-year-olds the ability to speak with certified gambling counselors can be vital new tools to strengthen that net.

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](http://www.ccp.org/chat) for confidential help.