



**WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DIANA GOODE**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**CONNECTICUT COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING**

**PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY COMMITTEE**

**Thursday, February 29, 2024**

***H.B. No. 5284 (RAISED) AN ACT REVISING VARIOUS GAMING STATUTES.***

Sen. Gaston, Rep. Boyd, and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill concerning various gaming statues, specifically gambling advertisements. My name is Diana Goode, Executive Director of the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG). Our organization fully supports the intent of this bill to provide protections to marketing gambling products to those under the age to legally partake.

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 expansion of gambling in October of 2021 and the inescapable surge of advertising for it, has changed the landscape of our state. The new online offerings, especially with sports betting, have engaged many new people towards the gambling platforms that would be less likely to frequent a brick-and-mortar establishment.

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.

Included in the recent prevalence study, Impacts of Legalized Gambling in Connecticut by Gemini Research was a section under special populations that outlined effects of gambling on our youth. They cited a study conducted by Stefanovics, E. A., Gueorguieva, R., Zhai, Z. W., & Potenza, M. N. (2023). Gambling participation among Connecticut adolescents from 2007 to 2019: Potential risk and protective factors in the *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*. The study, using cross-sectional surveys, with 14,401 participants, conducted every two years based on random sampling from schools in the State of Connecticut, found that from 2007-2017 that the prevalence of gambling went down during that time.

However, they then noted that it increased in 2019. They noted the increase coincided with increased sports gambling advertisements, media coverage, and availability.

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

We have had calls to our Helpline from many that are not 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.

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