



Derek Longmeier, Executive Director of Problem Gambling Network of Ohio  
Interested Party Testimony on HB282  
Finance Committee, Ohio House of Representatives  
November 20, 2019

Chairman Oeslager, Vice Chariman Scherer, and Ranking Member Cera. Thank you for providing the opportunity for me to testify as an interested party regarding HB282. My name is Derek Longmeier and I am the Executive Director of the Problem Gambling Network of Ohio (PGNO). PGNO's mission is to build a network of support for those impacted by gambling through collaboration, education and research. PGNO maintains a roster of over 120 members throughout the state, including those representing prevention, treatment, recovery, operators, and regulators. PGNO is in a very unique position, as we engage with the spectrum of stakeholders required to have a sound gambling service system in the state and take a neutral position regarding legalized gambling.

I want to thank Representatives Holmes and LaRe for their willingness to meet with me and to hear the concerns our membership has regarding this legislation. Proponents of the bill have positioned this legislation as a slight tweak to the current law, however, any changes to Ohio law that increase access to and availability of gambling products, is an expansion. Furthermore, electronic instant gaming devices are electronic gaming machines, which like slot machines and video lottery terminals, result in higher prevalence rates for problem gambling than other gambling products, such as traditional bingo or pull-tabs games.

HB282 lacks essential consumer protections needed for sound policy, including: training for all bingo game operators, promotion of the Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline, and dedicated funds to support those who will be negatively impacted by this expansion.

There is currently no infrastructure in place to ensure that those operating charitable gaming, whether paid or volunteer, are consistently trained to respond to those experiencing a gambling problem. Ohio's four casinos and seven racinos have focused on monitoring responsible gambling, through staff training, surveillance, compliance, and the statewide Voluntary Exclusion Program. We know that with consistent and regular training, staff are able to identify those with gambling problems and ensure that that individual is aware of available resources, such as the Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline. We request the inclusion of a requirement for all bingo operators to participate in a gambling orientation training, as well as an annual refresher training.

In addition to the bingo game operator training, The Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline will need to have a stronger presence in each bingo location by having the helpline posted throughout the charitable gaming establishment, including: on each instant electronic bingo terminal, on all promotional advertising, as well as on each bingo license. The Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline, operated by the United Way 2-1-1 of Greater Cleveland is often the first step toward help and hope for individuals struggling with a gambling problem. Of the approximately 400 calls per month, the helpline receives an average of one call per month from someone with a bingo or pull-tab problem. While the problem gambling rates for traditional bingo products are low, due to the frequency of play, style of game, and other factors, we anticipate the problem gambling rates for instant electronic bingo devices will be more in alignment with other electronic gaming machines, like slot machines and video lottery terminals, and as such, we expect to see calls to the helpline as a result of bingo play increase.

With increases in problem gambling rates, it is critical to have resources available to provide support. Using the casinos and racinos as an example, considerable emphasis is placed on responsible gambling, with a percent of revenue directed to problem gambling prevention, treatment, intervention and research. While it is easy to focus on the eleven casino and racino properties, we often ignore the thousands of other gambling outlets that are available in the state. With this bill addressing charitable gaming, a percentage of revenue would not be appropriate, so instead, PGNO proposes designating a portion of each licensing fee to a fund for problem gambling support services. Unlike substance use and mental health issues, there are no federal funds dedicated to support those who have been impacted by gambling, so problems that result due to expansion should be paid for with funds generated from expansion.

PGNO's work with all sectors of the gambling service system is indicative of our collaboration and we provide education to professionals, those impacted by problem gambling, as well as the larger community. We do all this with a focus on research. The Ohio Gambling Study, conducted by OhioMHAS, and a joint project of Ohio Responsible Gambling, which includes OhioMHAS, OLC, and OCCC, concluded that as gambling access increases, so does the prevalence of problems. We know that expanded gambling results in more individuals being impacted and we want to make sure there is a safety net of service in place for those who will need it.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as an interested party. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Linley, J., Frohnepfel-Hasson, S., Sherba, R. T. (n.d.). 2017 Survey of At-Risk and Problem Gambling Prevalence Among Ohioans. Columbus, OH: Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

UnitedWay 2-1-1 Community Resource Department (2019) Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline Reports.