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Interested Party Testimony on HB282
Finance Committee, Ohio House of Representatives
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Chairman Oeslager, Vice Chairman Scherer, and Ranking Member Cera. Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit written testimony as an interested party regarding HB282. Problem Gambling Network of Ohio (PGNO)'s mission is to build a network of support for those impacted by gambling through collaboration, education and research. PGNO is in a very unique position, as we engage with the spectrum of stakeholders (representing prevention, treatment, recovery, operators, and regulators) required to have a sound gambling service system in the state and we take a neutral position regarding legalized gambling.

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. The *2017 Survey of At-Risk and Problem Gambling Prevalence Among Ohioans* shows one-in-four Ohioans have had a negative experience with electronic gaming machines. Increasing access to these products, without adequate regulation, will result in detrimental consequences to Ohio communities.

HB282 lacks essential consumer protections needed for sound policy, including: training for all instant electronic bingo operators, promotion of the Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline and website, 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 the individual is aware of available resources, such as the Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline. We request the inclusion of a requirement for all instant electronic bingo operators to participate in a gambling orientation training, as well as an annual refresher training.

In addition to the instant electronic bingo game operator training, The Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline 1-800-589-9966 and GamblingHelpOhio.org, will need to have a stronger presence in each instant electronic bingo location by having information posted throughout, 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. We expect problem gambling rates for instant electronic bingo devices to be more in alignment with other electronic gaming machines, like slot machines and video lottery terminals, and as such, we expect to see an increase in calls to the helpline as a result of instant electronic bingo.

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 percentage of revenue directed to problem gambling prevention, treatment, intervention and research. While it is easy to focus on the eleven casino and racino properties, thousands of other gambling outlets are available in the state. PGNO requests for this legislation to direct a portion of each licensing fee to a fund for problem gambling support services. Unlike substance use and mental health issues, no federal funds are available to support those impacted by gambling. Problems that result due to expansion must be paid for with funds generated from expansion.

The 2017 Ohio Gambling Study, conducted by OhioMHAS, and a joint project of Ohio Responsible Gambling, which includes OhioMHAS, OLC, and OCCO, 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.

Linley, J., Frohnafel-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.