



Derek Longmeier, Executive Director of Problem Gambling Network of Ohio
Interested Party Testimony on HB282
December 9, 2020

Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for providing the opportunity to submit testimony as an interested party regarding HB282. My name is Derek Longmeier and I serve as 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 engages the spectrum of stakeholders (representing prevention, treatment, recovery, operators, and regulators) required to have a sound gambling service system in the state. While we take a neutral position regarding legalized gambling, it is our responsibility to advocate for consumer protections regarding legalized gambling and gaming expansion.

Proponents of the bill have positioned this legislation as a 'modernization' of 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, most commonly known as slot machines. Like slot machines and video lottery terminals, we expect instant electronic bingo devices to have 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* (Ohio Gambling Survey) shows one-in-four Ohioans have had a negative experience with electronic gaming machines. Increasing access to these products, without adequate consumer protections, will result in detrimental consequences to Ohio communities.

PGNO believes 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 can 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, must 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. Since instant electronic bingo devices are essentially slot machines, we expect problem gambling rates to be more in alignment with other electronic gaming machines, like slot machines and video lottery terminals. As such, we anticipate an increase in calls to the helpline as a result of instant electronic bingo.

With the anticipated increases in problem and disordered gambling that will result from this legislation, it is critical to have resources available to provide support. 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 Ohio Gambling Study concluded that as gambling access increases, so does the prevalence of problems. We know that as gambling expands, more individuals will be 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.