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## **Testimony of the Problem Gambling Network of Ohio (PGNO)**

Derek Longmeier, Executive Director

Re: HB 476, Gambling Expansion through Online Charitable Raffles

Presented to the Ohio House Finance Committee

October 28, 2025

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Derek Longmeier, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Problem Gambling Network of Ohio (PGNO). Our mission is to provide leadership and innovation to enhance Ohio's problem gambling service system through collaboration, advocacy, and support.

PGNO remains neutral regarding legalized gambling; however, we are deeply committed to ensuring that any gambling activity in Ohio includes robust consumer protections, effective oversight, and adequate resources to prevent and mitigate harm.

### **Online Charitable Raffles are a Form of Gambling Expansion**

While this bill is framed as expanding opportunities for charitable raffles, it nonetheless represents an expansion of gambling in the state of Ohio. Raffles are a form of gambling, and like any form of gambling, they carry potential risks for harm, fraud, and abuse. Therefore, they should be subject to the same level of oversight and regulation as other types of gaming already authorized in Ohio.

Without consistent standards, this legislation could unintentionally create new avenues for unregulated gambling and open the door for misuse by illegitimate organizations posing as charities. Inconsistent standards make it difficult for consumers to distinguish between legal and illegal raffles. This is why it is essential that raffles, whether conducted in person or online, be regulated under a clear framework that prioritizes public protection and accountability.

### **Strengthening Consumer Protections**

First and foremost, Know Your Customer (KYC) protections must be a requirement for any charitable raffle operations. Just as with other forms of regulated gambling, organizations must verify the name, age, and address of all participants through examination of a government-issued ID and in-person or digital verification.

These protections are not merely administrative; they are critical safeguards against underage gambling, identity theft, money laundering, and fraudulent ticket purchases. Implementing KYC protocols will help ensure that raffle participation remains limited to eligible adults and that funds raised serve their intended charitable purpose.

PGNO is committed to providing leadership & innovation to enhance Ohio's problem gambling service system through collaboration, advocacy, and support.



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### **Promoting Responsible Gambling Messaging**

Responsible gaming education is also essential. We request that all websites or digital platforms selling raffle tickets be required to display responsible gambling messaging and prominently feature the Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline number 1-800-589-9966, and/or the corresponding website, [www.GamblingHelpOhio.org](http://www.GamblingHelpOhio.org).

These measures are consistent with existing best practices in other areas of regulated gambling in Ohio and serve as an important reminder that help and resources are available for individuals who may be struggling.

### **Oversight, Licensing, and Enforcement**

Just as charitable bingo distributors are currently regulated through the Ohio Attorney General's Office, organizations conducting raffles should be required to be licensed through the same office.

Licensing provides critical oversight, prevents fraudulent activity, and ensures that charitable gaming revenues are used for legitimate public benefit.

In addition, online platforms that facilitate raffle ticket sales or select winners must also be required to obtain a license through the Attorney General's office. Without this layer of regulation, Ohio risks creating an unmonitored digital marketplace vulnerable to exploitation and financial misconduct.

Furthermore, the bill must clearly define mechanisms for ongoing oversight, regulation, and enforcement. A robust regulatory infrastructure is essential to prevent abuse, ensure compliance, and maintain public trust in charitable fundraising.

This abuse is not theoretical. This year, a South Zanesville firefighter pleaded guilty to embezzling over \$32,000 in charitable raffle funds being raised to buy a new ambulance. He diverted online raffle proceeds from Stripe, Shopify, and PayPal into his personal accounts.

This case highlights how critical oversight and regulation in charitable raffles are needed to prevent fraud and abuse, underscoring the need for licensing, identity verification, and strict regulatory safeguards.

### **Conclusion**

In closing, while we support the spirit of empowering charitable organizations to raise funds to support their missions, however, this bill, as currently structured, represents a gambling expansion that must be treated as such. Ohio must apply the same rigorous consumer protection, licensing, and responsible gambling standards that already exist across other forms of gaming.



By integrating robust KYC verification, responsible gambling messaging, and thorough state oversight, the legislature can ensure that charitable raffles operate transparently and in alignment with Ohio's commitment to protecting its citizens from gambling-related harm.

Thank you again, Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the Finance Committee, for your thoughtful consideration of these recommendations. PGNO stands ready to collaborate and support the development of a regulatory framework that balances the needs of charitable organizations with the responsibility to protect Ohioans.

Thank you for your time, and I welcome your questions.

