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Interested Party Testimony on HB194
Finance Committee, Ohio House of Representatives
May 27, 2020

Chairman Oeslager, Vice Chariman Scherer, and Ranking Member Cera. Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit written testimony as an interested party regarding HB194. 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 unique, as we engage with the spectrum of stakeholders (representing prevention, treatment, recovery, operators, and regulators) required to have a sound gambling service system in Ohio and we take a neutral position regarding legalized gambling.

We thank Representatives Greenspan and Kelly for their willingness to enhance consumer protections, which include: dedicated funds specific to problem gambling services, publicizing the Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline, and prohibiting wagering on sport or athletic events for primary and secondary school students. These measures are critical steps toward ensuring sound policy for this complex issue.

While many of the vital consumer protections are included within HB194, there are three areas we ask for further examination: eligible games and events, the regulatory authority, and limiting sports wagering to Ohio's four casinos and seven racinos.

Sports wagering should be limited to professional U.S. sports. PGNO shares the concerns of the Ohio Inter-University Council and the NCAA regarding the impact on the integrity of athletics that may result, should legalized sports wagering be allowed in Ohio for non-professional athletics. Amateur athletes whether collegiate, or otherwise, are not afforded the resources that are provided by professional athletes, and as such, are at greater risk to be exploited. With the various means for sports gaming, regulators will be sufficiently busy monitoring professional U.S. sports and may not have the resources or availability to adequately monitor sports wagering if expanded more widely.

As you examine the best state department to serve as the regulatory authority, we ask that you join Governor DeWine in selecting the Ohio Casino Control Commission (OCCC) as the regulator. Sports wagering is complex and the OCCC has experience regulating other complicated, skill-based, gambling activities. These games have both an element of chance and some element of skill, which is similar to sports betting, as knowledge about the games, odds, etc., will increase the odds of winning.

Furthermore, the OCCC should serve as the regulatory authority because compliance and regulation is the sole focus of the OCCC. The Ohio Lottery Commission (OLC) has to walk the very fine line of both promoting gambling in order to generate additional revenue for Ohio schools as well as self-regulating. This places the OLC in a difficult position, as these priorities may conflict.

Our final area that we ask for your consideration is regarding the outlets where sports wagering would be permitted. Ohio's four casinos and seven racinos have dedicated significant resources and focus to monitoring responsible gambling, through staff training, surveillance, compliance, and the statewide Voluntary Exclusion Program. Many of the fraternal organizations and veterans' clubs are operated by volunteers. There is currently no infrastructure in place to ensure that workers, whether paid or volunteer, are trained to handle the complex issues that result from gambling. By permitting sports wagering at veteran clubs and fraternal organizations, you are allowing an addictive product to be distributed by individuals ill-equipped to provide the critical resources to support those who may be negatively impacted. Additionally, based on the *2017 Survey of At-Risk and Problem Gambling Prevalence Among Ohioans* (Ohio Gambling Study), among veterans, sports gamblers had the highest rate of at-risk/problem gambling, which was 3.5% higher than the general adult population.

The *Ohio Gambling Study* was conducted by OhioMHAS and found that Ohio adults experienced nearly a 100% increase in the rates of both at-risk and problem gambling after the opening of the Ohio's eleven casinos and racinos.

The *Ohio Gambling Study* also showed that over 24% of Ohio adults surveyed experienced a problem after having bet on sports. We know from the *Ohio Gambling Study*, and others, that as gambling access increases, so does the prevalence of problems. Our infrastructure and processes are commonly referred to by the National Council on Problem Gambling, and other national experts as the 'Ohio Model' - the example of what other states should be doing.

We ask you not to be pressured by the pace of sports wagering rollouts in other states, but to focus on determining a strategy and timeline that is right for Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as an interested party.

Linley, J., Frohnapfel-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.