
Prevention Action Alliance

Lifetime Prevention | Lifetime Wellness

Interested Party Testimony Ohio State Senate Select Committee on Gaming June 10, 2021

Chairman Schuring, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as an **interested party** regarding **Senate Bill 176**. My name is Frances Gerbig, and I am the Executive Director of Prevention Action Alliance (PAA). PAA is a prevention certified statewide nonprofit organization that has been in existence for over 30 years. PAA is based in Columbus, Ohio. We are dedicated to leading healthy communities in the prevention of substance misuse and the promotion of mental health wellness. PAA offers a wealth of resources, training services, grants, and advocacy opportunities for those who are active in the prevention and mental health fields.

I appreciate your time and dedication to these important issues, and I would like to provide a local perspective as to how gambling has impacted fellow Ohioans in the communities that Prevention Action Alliance Serves.

We know from the *Ohio Gambling Study*, and others research, that problem gambling can affect anyone. However, based on Ohio's survey findings, populations at the highest risk for developing gambling problems are males 18-24, African Americans, adults of Hispanic ethnicity, and people with substance use disorder or serious depression. In the 2012 baseline survey, more men than women were in the at-risk/problem gambling group, but in the 2017 survey, problem gambling was almost even between men and women. The 2017 Survey of At-Risk and Problem Gambling Prevalence Among Ohioans, conducted by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and released by Ohio Responsible Gambling, which includes the Ohio Lottery Commission and the Ohio Casino Control Commission, found that the prevalence of at-risk and problem gamblers has doubled since the four casinos and seven racinos have opened in Ohio.

As I look at the impact that gambling has had on communities in Ohio, I want to make sure that resources are available, and protections are in place to lessen further harm. I would suggest that the provisions outline below, be included in SB176 as protective factors for all Ohioans:

Minimum Responsible Gambling Measures for Sports Wagering:

- Set and enforce the minimum legal age to wager at 21 and include age verification measures.

- Designate the Ohio Casino Control Commission as the regulatory agency.
- Require responsible gaming programs, which include comprehensive employee training, self-exclusion, ability to set limits on time and money spent.
- Requirements for the inclusion of help/prevention messages in all marketing and promotion.
- Clear marketing guidelines to provide clarity of promotions, odds of winning, and the costs to participate.
- Include the Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline and/or other statewide resources on all communications from the operators.
- Permit sports wagering at casino/racino properties, and if mobile, only provide for one mobile license/property.
- Limit sports wagering to US professional sports.
- Include sports betting in the Ohio Voluntary Exclusion program

Minimum Responsible Gambling Measures for E-Bingo:

- Set and enforce the minimum legal age to wager at 18. Operators have an affirmative obligation to put in place technical and operational measures to prevent access by those who are underage.
- Dedicate a portion of the funds from licensing to prevent, treat & research gambling addiction and mitigation of harms.
- Require e-bingo operators to implement responsible training for all staff and volunteers, which shall include warning signs of problem gambling and gambling help resources.
- Include the Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline and/or other statewide resources on all communications from the operators
- Set limits for the number of e-bingo machines per establishment.
- Limit e-bingo to inside each licensed establishment

Prevention Action Alliance as a member of the Problem Gambling Network of Ohio can provide you with subject matter experts regarding the impact of gambling. Based on my experience and expertise, I would expect the requirement of help/prevention messages in all marketing and promotion as well as the establishment of clear marketing guidelines to prevent targeting vulnerable populations, including youth, elderly, military, and minorities. In addition, I would also expect the dedication of funds (2 – 5%) of all sports wagering tax revenue to be directed to prevent, treat, and research gambling addiction and mitigation of harms.

Ohio has a history of collaboration when it comes to this issue. The gambling treatment field began in our state. Ohio has developed award-winning campaigns, drawn on national and international expertise and tracked statewide and community-specific data regarding gambling prevalence, which includes casino, lottery, stocks, sports, and other avenues, like bingo and raffles.

As with other forms of gambling, there is a significant portion of the population who experience negative consequences as a result of gambling. It is incumbent upon our governmental bodies to help both operators and their customers by requiring reasonable regulations that will ensure the health and

safety of our citizens. Prevention Action Alliance believes that the minimum standards indicated above, paired with efforts to combat illegal operations, and collaboration from regulators, operators, and prevention and treatment professionals will mitigate harm caused by expanded gambling in Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as an interested party. I look forward to working with you further on these, and other, important issues impacting Ohioans.

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Executive Director

Linley, J., Frohnappel-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.