



**WRITTEN STATEMENT
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING**

Statement by
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For the Senate Select Committee on Gaming – June 10, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as an interested party regarding the gaming legislation being considered by the Senate Select Committee on Gaming. The National Council on Problem Gambling advocates on behalf of our state affiliate chapter and other members in Ohio in addressing proposals to expand gambling in the state. These include the Problem Gambling Network of Ohio and the families and communities dealing with gambling disorders and addiction.

PGNO has addressed the concerns over the major expansion of gambling in Ohio. The National Council on Problem Gambling echoes those concerns and offers its perspective on the impact of expansion in other states. Like PGNO, the National Council does not take a position on gambling, we only want to ensure that policymakers are aware of the consequences of gambling for those who face behavioral health disorders and can become addicted. For these individuals and their families safeguards must be in place to prevent compulsive activities and to provide treatment and counseling.

We know illegal gambling including sports betting occurs across Ohio, just as in much of the rest of the country. Legalization will likely increase availability and acceptability of sports gambling and thus increase participation, which has led in other states to more gambling problems. The National Council has seen the expansion of gambling to include sports betting and online wagers result in an increase in calls to gambling helplines. In Michigan, which opened sports betting earlier this year, calls to the helpline doubled over the previous years totals in February, March and April of this year.

The Problem Gambling Network of Ohio has provided a set a minimum requirements for sports betting in Ohio. These reflect the Safer Sports Betting Initiative adopted by NCPG. In particular we would emphasize the need for the following:

- Dedicated funds of 2-5% of sports wagering revenue for prevention, treatment and research on gambling addiction

- Designation of an appropriate regulatory agency, such as the Ohio Casino Control Commission to establish and enforce responsible gambling practices for operators

- Requirements for marketing and advertising to include information on help and prevention resources, including helpline and text/chat networks

- Responsible gaming programs for operators including employee training, self-exclusion lists and the ability to set limits on time and money spent

In addition, Ohio should now expand its research on problem gambling, with more emphasis on sports wagering and other gambling opportunities. A great deal is to be learned about the ways to address mobile and online betting and its impact on gambling disorders. A national survey conducted by NCPG following the Supreme Court decision in *Murphy v. NCAA* in 2018, examined the attitudes and experiences about gambling. It involved the views and opinions of more than 28,000 respondents. The survey found that sports bettors were more likely to be younger and at greater risk of problem gambling. The survey found gamblers who bet sports weekly or more often; had 5 times as many signs of gambling problems as other gamblers.

We know there are also considerations to expand e-bingo in Ohio. We share PGNO's concern that there are few limits or oversight of e-bingo. In many cases, the e-bingo machines pose a challenge to a population that is at risk of problem gambling. An open and unrestricted environment will not serve the best interests of the state and its families. We would urge the state to not overreach in its expansion of gambling opportunities without the appropriate understanding and research of the consequences of such an expansion.

NCPG is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1972, that leads state and national stakeholders in the development of comprehensive policy and programs for all those affected by problem gambling; serves as the national advocate for programs and services to assist problem gamblers and their families; and works to improve health and wellness by reducing the personal, social and economic costs of problem gambling. NCPG is neutral in our opinion of the legalization and expansion of various forms of gambling; excepting that expansions must include funding for research, help and prevention programs, treatment, recovery services, and requirements for regulations to help and protect those affected by problem gambling.

The National Council on Problem Gambling operates the National Problem Gambling Helpline Network (1-800-522-4700). The network is a single national access point to all the state problem gambling helplines, just like 911 is for police emergencies. So, no matter where someone sees the National Helpline, whether on TV, internet, billboard or flyer, they are able to reach help for their area. One call, text or chat will get a person to problem gambling help anywhere in the U.S. 24/7/365.

The recommendations of PGNO and NCPG, if implemented, will provide badly needed help to bolster the existing problem gambling safety net prior to the onset of expanded gambling. Together with all stakeholders who will profit from sports betting our challenge is to implement measures to reduce that harm as much as possible even as gambling expands across the nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please feel free to reach out to the National Council on Problem Gambling for any assistance in research or best practices on gambling addiction treatment and programs.