



Lane County Public Health

Prevention Program - Problem Gambling Prevention

DATE: February 15, 2013

TO: House Committee on Human Services and Housing

RE: HB 2163 | Requires Director of Oregon State Lottery to employ individual to advise director and Oregon State Lottery Commission on mental health and addiction issues associated with Oregon State Lottery. Requires commission to adopt policy to minimize risks and mitigate harms associated with lottery games.

Chair Tomei and Members of the Committee,

The Lane County Board of Commissioners has reviewed and is in support of HB 2163.

As one of several problem gambling prevention coordinators at the local level, it is my job to increase community awareness of the problem and resources available for problem gambling. That said, that message can be especially challenging given the few resources we have and far more industry resources devoted to promotion of gambling. Public awareness campaigns are costly. In our field, we often liken the awareness of problem gambling to that of alcohol and tobacco 40 years ago. We are far behind, have fewer resources, and less of a "visual" representation of what addiction looks like. Gambling addiction is far easier to hide. At the ground level, and at the state level with Oregon Problem Gambling services, we can only do so much with the resources we have. A prevention perspective from within the Lottery can help reinforce our efforts in the field and prevent future public relations issues with the Oregon State Lottery due to perceived marketing that appeals to young and other vulnerable populations.

We need to protect our most vulnerable. Electronic gambling has been largely a grand experiment; our youth are experiencing this in the first generation, with few checks and balances, with little research that can give us an idea of what to expect.

The principles of this bill, while continuing to amend and enhance the bill to include language that the position would require expertise in "prevention of problem gambling," rather than just "expertise in responsible gambling programs."

Institutionalizing a proper social responsibility effort is in the State's duty of care to protect its citizens and state from the social and economic harms of problem gambling. A dedicated position within the lottery to minimize risks and mitigate harms of problem gambling could greatly help enhance services provided around the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard on this issue.

Sincerely,

Julie Hynes, M.A., C.P.S.

Lane County Problem Gambling Prevention Coordinator

Recipient, National Council on Problem Gambling 2012 Wuelfing Award for Prevention