

ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES *of* OREGON

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February 5, 2014

Rep. Carolyn Tomei, Chair
Rep. David Gomberg, Vice-Chair
Rep. Andy Olson, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Housing

Re: HB 4040

Dear Chair Tomei, Vice-Chair Gomberg, Vice-Chair Olson and Members of the Committee:

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) is a statewide association of religious denominations, congregations and community-based ministries representing thousands of Oregonians in every rural and urban community throughout the state of Oregon. Our support for HB 4040 emanates from our concern that the lottery preys on the most vulnerable in society. We support this bill because it requires that the Oregon State Lottery Commission balance its obligation to maximize net revenues with its obligation to serve the public good. Specifically, we support HB 4040 because it would require that the state adopt a comprehensive gaming policy that considers the best available research on the effects of games on vulnerable individuals, and employs strategies to minimize the risk of harm to those individuals. Addicted gamblers are not the only ones who suffer because of the misuse of the lottery. We all pay a price for these addictions. For those who say that the vast majority of people can gamble without any problem, we ask, "Which five people of 100 are we willing to sacrifice?" This is not a trade-off an ethical society should be willing to make.

EMO is historically opposed to state sponsored gaming. We believe that the proper role for government is to limit its negative impacts on society and to regulate its application. State sponsorship and advertisement of gambling sends a wrong message to our communities and our children. EMO continues to reiterate that government should be funded, in general, by tax revenue. Given the inherent fiscal instability of the state's budget, we believe that tax reform is the appropriate response. Ideally, we would like to see government out of the gaming business altogether. However, until that time, we urge the state to reduce the harmful impacts on families and communities by strengthening the regulations applied to the Oregon Lottery. HB 4040 is a step in the right direction because it requires the state to be accountable for the harm the gaming business has on certain individuals and to report these findings to appropriate legislative committees for review and action. We urge your support.

Respectfully,

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