

ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES *of* OREGON

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February 20, 2014

Chair Laurie Monnes Anderson
Vice-Chair Jeff Kruse
Senator Tim Knopp
Senator Chip Shields
Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward

Re: HB 4028

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson, Vice-Chair Kruse, 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 4028 emanates from our concern that the lottery preys on the most vulnerable in society.

We support this bill because it permits that the Oregon State Lottery Commission to use existing dollars allocated for the cost of administration to further state policy to minimize the risks and mitigate the harms of problem gambling. Specifically, we support HB 4028 because it allows the state lottery to collect and report data related to problem gambling and to advertise the availability of prevention and treatment programs. Oregon's Problem Gambling Service tracked the impact of problem gambling awareness ads and responsible gambling ads based on helpline call volume and gambling treatment enrollments. Their research shows that this advertising significantly increased their ability to help Oregonians in need. Gambling treatment enrollments have declined since the Lottery discontinued these ads last spring. We need to redirect money to these ads so that we can once again get much needed services to those whose lives are impacted by problem gambling.

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, the state must do all we can to reduce the harmful impacts of problem gambling on families and communities by collecting data and advertising treatment for Oregonians who need help. We urge you to support HB 4028.

Respectfully,

Jan Elfers
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