

Cascadia Problem Gambling Services
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Thank you for providing me with this opportunity to lend support to House Bill 4028A. As the program manager, and a clinician, at Oregon's largest outpatient gambling treatment program, I regularly see the tragic consequences of unchecked problem gambling. This is a persistent, often hidden, and destructive addiction. Fortunately, I also regularly see that treatment is effective for the vast majority of these clients. However, many Oregonians and their loved ones do not know that free and professional treatment is available throughout the State.

According to Herbert and Louis research, "Problem Gambler Treatment Outreach: Case Study for Increasing Enrollment in Treatment" (2007); when there was television advertising to promote problem gambling treatment, there were more calls to the Problem Gambling Helpline. Anecdotally, we have observed the same phenomenon at our treatment center. Marketing treatment raises public awareness and more individuals do seek help.

Currently the effective and comprehensive system that has been designed and implemented throughout Oregon to treat problem gamblers is being underutilized. Help is out there for citizens who need it, but there is simply not a consistent social marketing campaign to raise awareness about this public health issue. Consider that the campaigns to raise awareness about cigarettes, alcohol and drugs have been in force for many years and it took those many years to establish these issues as legitimate and de-stigmatized in the public's mind. A similar measure of steady effort will be needed to make the public aware of the prevention and treatment of problem gambling.

HB 4028A promises to mobilize resources that can raise public awareness about the treatment of problem gambling. It funds a consistent commitment, on the part of Oregon, to reach out to affected individuals, through marketing, to help them learn how to connect with services. This effort is "commensurate with the public good."

In short, I support this bill as it currently stands. It has the potential to establish a regular practice of marketing the prevention and treatment of problem gambling, and should help citizens impacted by problem gambling to learn about and contact treatment resources. It is long overdue.