



Lane County Public Health

Prevention Program - Problem Gambling Prevention

DATE: February 20, 2014

TO: The Honorable Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair and Committee Members,
Senate Committee on Health Care and Human Services

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 4028A-Engrossed | Allows Oregon State Lottery to use moneys allocated for payment of costs of administration of state lottery to pay expenses incurred to implement policies related to problem gambling, to collect data related to problem gambling and to advertise availability of programs for treatment of problem gambling.

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding House Bill 4028 A-Engrossed. The Lane County Board of Commissioners has reviewed and is in support of this bill.

As a problem gambling prevention coordinator on the local level for over 12 years, I've seen ebbs and flows with many issues related to problem gambling, including public perception, funding and relationship with Oregon Lottery. Local prevention specialists like me across the state spend a portion of our time on problem gambling efforts; we work to increase community awareness of problem gambling, promote resources available for problem gambling, and work to help reduce risk factors for those susceptible to risky gambling. We often have to try and counter industry messages which have far more resources devoted to the promotion of gambling.

About one in every 37 Oregonian adults (2.7%; approximately 81,000 adults) is a problem gambler. However, problem gambling penetration rates are typically low, with only about three to five percent of problem gamblers seeking help. Much of this problem has to do with low overall awareness of treatment, acknowledgement of gambling as an addiction, and stigma for seeking help. In our field, we often liken the awareness of problem gambling to where alcohol and tobacco were decades ago. There is comparably a low public awareness of problem gambling and fewer policies devoted to mitigating problem gambling.

There are a few key issues that we hope will be mitigated by the passing of this bill:

- Treatment penetration rate has dropped since Lottery advertising was stopped in mid-2013
- Awareness is reduced regarding availability of problem gambling treatment and that the help is free (source: Oregon Problem Gambling Helpline Director, Michele Tantriella-Modell, personal correspondence, 2/5/14)
- Increase the amount of data collected to respond to and address high risk Lottery games, and/or persons at increased risk of developing gambling problems



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- Institutionalizing public policy so that, regardless of who presides in leadership levels at the Lottery, the commitment to address problem gambling is sustained.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comment on this bill. I am happy to respond to any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

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

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