

To: The Honorable Representative Monnes Anderson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health Care and Human Services

From: Wes Wood  
President, VOICES OF PROBLEM GAMBLING RECOVERY, INC.

Date: February 20, 2014

Subject: HB 4028A-Amendment to ORS461.549; Problem Gambling Awareness Ads

I am here today, as President of VOICES OF PROBLEM GAMBLING RECOVERY, INC.. Our mission is to advocate, educate, and promote healthy recovery. We provide: statewide speakers bureau, outreach with care providers, peer mentor certification and placement, work with government, and the Oregon Lottery. It is imperative, especially now, that action be taken to minimize the damage, to our citizens, our economy, and their families. This bill is a part of that work. It is key, for the public, to know their options and availability of treatment and care. Declining numbers in treatment do not represent a lesser problem, quite the opposite. I urge you, through this bill, be a part of a better future for Oregonians.

Thank you again for your time and attention.

Respectfully,



Wes Wood

Attachment

1/2

**Student Comments Regarding Gambling Addiction Guest Speakers**

I think hearing Wes' story and realizing how high functioning compulsive gamblers can be and how greatly it changes their life and behaviors were really valuable. Also, my eyes were opened to the way gambling has come to be a part of Oregon and the intentionality of gambling game companies to get people to play their games and keep them coming back.

While listening to the guest speakers today, I think what I took from it most is how much addiction tears you up... You could see in the way that he was talking about his gambling addiction that he has definitely gone to the bottom and has struggled. We can talk about addictions in class and understand what they are and how they begin and how they are treated, but we never have a true understanding of what it is really like to have that life on your shoulders and what it really does to you. Another thing that I took from the speaker was that for him the money didn't matter it was just about the gambling. I think that's really interesting because that is what is being put into the pot is the money, wouldn't you think about that at some point? I really appreciated them both sharing about gambling addictions and that they came in because I didn't really know about it and now I have a good idea of what it is like and how it differs from other addictions.

One thing the speakers mentioned that left an impression on me was the phrase, "Money is nothing." It shows just how impacting this addiction is, and it put into perspective the mindset that chronic gambling can put you into. When our speaker said that he actually stole money from his mom's retirement account, I was blown away. "Gambling addiction" is harder to frame in my mind than drug addiction, but obviously it's a major problem and needs to be addressed more.

I think that it's really easy to ignore the dangers of drug abuse because it isn't something that necessarily affects us personally. When we have speakers come in and speak to us about their personal experiences, how their choices have impacted their family, and how their family even impacted their choices, it brings the dangers of drug abuse much closer to home. The most valuable part for me, when speakers come, is hearing about their personal experiences first hand.

I appreciated what the man with the addiction had to say. I found it amazing he was able to go through so much money. I value money way too much to even understand this. To me it was fascinating how it could completely change one's priorities in life just as a drug would.

It was important to hear that money doesn't matter to a gambling addict. I tend to assume that the goal behind addictions is the substance of the addiction, but what I am learning more is that it's about the addictive behavior and the psychological issues rather than the substances involved.

I loved that the second speaker spoke so honestly about his family and seeing when he was at bottom. It's very humbling to hear people talk about what they've denied for so long and own it. I love that

phrase "it is what it is." It implies that you own your stuff and move on. I think that being goal-oriented is a great lens to work from and can motivate the client by focusing on one thing: sobriety.

I found the information about gambling and the addiction that it really has on people the most valuable. Before this class, I had no idea that gambling could be THAT addictive. I thought it was just something that people got over in time, not that you could blow millions of dollars. I was shocked to be honest. I could never imagine spending that much money, but I guess it can happen!

I have never heard an addicted gamblers story before, so for me I loved hearing from their perspective. It was interesting to hear that money had no value for him. That money was simply a token to his high, and the actual high was in the risk