



OREGON COUNCIL on PROBLEM GAMBLING

Jeff Barker, Chair  
Vice-Chair Greg Barreto  
Vice-Chair Janelle Bynum  
Oregon State Legislature House Committee on Business and Labor

February 12, 2020

**RE: Support of HB 4057**

Dear Chair Barker, Vice-Chair Barreto, Vice-Chair Bynum and Members of the Committee,

I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Council on Problem Gambling, an affiliate of the National Council on Problem Gambling, and an officer of the Board of Directors of the National Council on Problem Gambling. The Oregon Council on Problem Gambling is dedicated to promoting the health of Oregonians by supporting efforts to reduce gambling-related harm. I am here to lend support to HB 4057, and would like to provide a special focus on my testimony on the student athlete population.

My experience in this area is from being a University of Oregon Substance Abuse Prevention Program instructor for eight years, of which three years I taught problem gambling courses specifically for incoming student athletes. I am also currently engaging with the NCAA's Sport Science Institute on developing problem gambling prevention programming for student athletes across all three NCAA divisions.

During my tenure as an instructor, my overall take-aways from student athletes was that 1) problem gambling was a relatively new concept overall to them, despite generally knowing at least one individual in their lives who has a gambling problem; 2) student athletes were very aware of individuals betting on their team's (and often their individual) performance; and 3) due to some student athletes' national prominence, some students expressed experiencing wagering tension around their own performances, in addition to pressure to provide inside information about such factors as team injuries and availability. Student athletes also tended to be very wary of admitting they had ever wagered on sports, as the NCAA forbids sports wagering among its constituents.

A 2016 NCAA survey showed that 55% of men had reported gambling for money in the past year and, despite student athletes' high awareness of the NCAA forbidding student athlete gambling on sports, one in four men and one in 20 women admitted wagering on sports for money in the previous year. It is expected that these figures are largely under-reported, due to the risks that students face admitting they are gambling on sports. It is also worth noting that the latest NCAA survey, conducted every four years, was last conducted prior to the 2018 repeal of the Professional & Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA). Legal sports wagering has skyrocketed since the PASPA repeal.

Additional points for committee consideration are:

- Among current student-athletes who have ever gambled for money, 88% of men and 69% of women had their first gambling experience before entering college (NCAA, 2017). The brain's prefrontal cortex, which manages executive functioning, is one of the last areas to develop (approximately age 25).



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- Technology is changing the way student athletes gamble; the primary method to wager is now online (NCAA, 2017). An abundance of research shows that electronic forms of gambling increase the risk of problem gambling.
- The NCAA’s position on sports wagering is: “The NCAA opposes all forms of legal and illegal sports wagering, which has the potential to undermine the integrity of sports contests and jeopardizes the

For additional context, I have provided a few essay excerpts from un-named students to lend perspective from their own words.

*Below: Student athlete comments in University of Oregon problem gambling course, 2017*

I have witnessed other athletes gamble and in fact have been told that people will place a wage on my performance as well as my teams. At first, I never saw gambling as a problem. I saw it as a way to make money. However, there are so many risk factors: the most common ones are

Personally I have not witnessed any student athlete gamble, but I have experienced other students wanting to bet money on my games. [redacted] here were bets going around with a lot of the students on us beating [redacted] :

experienced that. For me, I would find it incredibly stressful and it would alter my game if I had adults or other players betting on my performance. What a lot of fans tend to forget is how much stress athletes are under during games and how terrible it feels to let people down. According to the NCAA, “gambling can quickly escalate out of control and affect both psychological and physical well-being” (Dorovinsky,

In summary, by ensuring that no wagering on sporting events is connected with post-secondary institutions in Oregon, you would be sending a message that you value the health of student athletes and young adults, in addition to the integrity of the game, over monetary gain. You would also be setting a precedent on not opening a potential slippery slope with wagering on other forms of amateur athletics.

Thanks very much for your consideration of this testimony.

Julie Hynes, MA, CPS  
Executive Director