NCPG
National Council on Problem Gambling
National Helpline 800.522.4700

WRITTEN STATEMENT
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

Statement by
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as an interested party regarding the sports betting proposals being considered by the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. The National Council on Problem Gambling advocates on behalf of our state affiliate chapter and other members in Maine in addressing proposals to expand gambling in the state. These include the Maine Council on Problem Gambling and the families and communities dealing with gambling disorders and addiction.

You will hear from those who have an interest in operating sports betting and other gambling programs in the state. They hope to be the winners of contracts and licenses that will involve millions of dollars in wagers and new revenue for Maine. NCPG comes to speak for those who will not be winners whatever gambling venues are made legal. Instead, we speak for the problem gamblers, who struggle with an addiction that requires attention in the legislation and regulation of the operators and vendors of new gambling options.

We know illegal gambling including sports betting occurs across Maine, just as in much of the rest of the country. Legalization will likely increase availability and acceptability of sports gambling and thus increase participation, which may lead to more gambling problems.

NCPG is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1972, that leads state and national stakeholders in the development of comprehensive policy and programs for all those affected by problem gambling; serves as the national advocate for programs and services to assist problem gamblers and their families; and works to improve health and wellness by reducing the personal, social and economic costs of problem gambling. NCPG is neutral in our opinion of the legalization and expansion of various forms of gambling; excepting that expansions must include funding for research, help and prevention programs, treatment, recovery services, and requirements for regulations to help and protect those affected by problem gambling.

NCPG adopted principles for sports betting legislation after the 2018 Supreme Court decision to allow states to legalize wagers on sporting events. We believe any legislation on sports gambling should meet the following benchmarks:

- Ensure that any expansion of sports gambling includes dedicated funds to prevent and treat gambling addiction.

- Require sports betting operators to implement responsible gaming programs which include comprehensive employee training, self-exclusion, ability to set limits on time and money spent betting, specific requirements for the inclusion of help/prevention messages in external marketing.
- Assign a regulatory agency to enforce the regulations and requirements that are enacted.
- Conduct surveys of the prevalence of gambling addiction prior to expansion and at regular periods thereafter in order to monitor impacts of legalized sports betting and have data that will support evidence-based mitigation efforts.
- Fund and promote of a helpline to address problem gambling to make people aware of the resources and treatment available.

Some of the proposals under consideration take the important step to fund problem gambling services. These proposals would set aside one percent of the revenue from sports wagering and mobile betting for the Gambling Addiction and Treatment Fund. This dedicated funding reflects the NCPG principle cited above.

But, in order to provide treatment, it is critical that problem gamblers and their families know how to get the resources and help they need. This means broad promotion of helplines and raising awareness of problem gambling. As gambling options move to online and mobile platforms, it is important that people are made aware of the ways help is available. An expansion of gambling options should also mean an expansion of promotion materials and media to reach those affected. Those who are gambling online or on their mobile phone must be able to access help the same way that they play.

In addition, Maine should now expand its research on problem gambling, with more emphasis on sports wagering and fantasy competitions. A great deal is to be learned about the ways to address mobile and online betting and its impact on gambling disorders. A national survey conducted by NCPG following the Supreme Court decision in Murphy v. NCAA in 2018, examined the attitudes and experiences about gambling. It involved the views and opinions of more than 28,000 respondents. The survey found that sports bettors were more likely to be younger and at greater risk of problem gambling. The survey found gamblers who bet sports weekly or more often; had 5 times as many signs of gambling problems as other gamblers.

In addition to providing treatment for problem gamblers, Maine can also take steps to encourage responsible gambling. One area of focus should be in payment processing as a way to set guardrails to assist bettors. This means limit setting should be the default option, and play should stop once a limit is reached. Other principles that should be adopted include:

- Operators should encourage and even incentivize the player to set payment limits.
- Players should have the option of setting daily, weekly or monthly limits on the size of deposits.

- Players should be able to lower limits immediately.
- Players may request increases in or removal of their limits.
- After a player reaches a limit and play is stopped and any request for increase or removal is made, there will be an additional delay of at least 24 hours. The player must reconfirm their request for the limit to be changed.
- Limits should be periodically reviewed, with payments history and analysis of current deposits and spending projected on an annual basis.

Even with responsible gambling measures by operators and vendors, there will be those who exceed their limits and put their funds and health at risk. This is why treatment and addiction services are needed. Those states with the greatest history in dealing with problem gambling are now setting aside up to 5 percent of revenues for treatment, prevention awareness and other services.

The National Council on Problem Gambling operates the National Problem Gambling Helpline Network (1-800-522-4700). The network is a single national access point to all the state problem gambling helplines, just like 911 is for police emergencies. So, no matter where someone sees the National Helpline, whether on TV, internet, billboard or flyer, they are able to reach help for their area. One call, text or chat will get you to problem gambling help anywhere in the U.S. 24/7/365.

These recommendations, if implemented, will provide badly needed help to bolster the existing problem gambling safety net prior to the onset of expanded gambling. Together with all stakeholders who will profit from sports betting our challenge is to implement measures to reduce that harm as much as possible even as sports gambling expands across the nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please feel free to reach out to the National Council on Problem Gambling for any assistance in research or best practices on gambling addiction treatment and programs.