

To: Co-chairs: The Honorable Craig Hickman and The Honorable Laura Supica
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

Date: May 11, 2025

RE: *LD 793 An Act to Modernize Gaming Revenue Allocations and Increase Efforts to Prevent Gambling Addiction*

My name is Lori Manson. I am submitting written testimony “neither for nor against” LD793.

I am the Problem Gambling Services Coordinator at AdCare Maine, the non-profit with the contract with Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention to administer problem gambling services for the State of Maine. I’m the only person who works full-time on problem gambling in Maine. I am also a member of the all-volunteer Maine Council on Problem Gambling (MCPG), and I am the Maine representative and past chair of the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) State Affiliates Committee. It is my hope to serve as a resource to this committee on this bill and any other bills related to gambling.

MCPG, NCPG, and AdCare are all gambling neutral. We are neither for nor against legalized gambling. It is our goal that all legislation and rules are written with best practices in reducing the harm of gambling addiction in mind, and that enough money is allocated to raise awareness and provide services through the spectrum of research, prevention, intervention, treatment, recovery, and workforce development.

For months, I’ve been waiting to see the text of LD793. What I’ve seen so far is alarming to me. The issue of gambling addiction, though in the title, is barely mentioned as compared to other areas in the cascade such as harness racing and agriculture fairs. When I saw the proposed working group, I was startled to see there is no mention of including anyone familiar with the field of problem gambling and what is already taking place for problem gambling prevention and other services in Maine. Will the needs of people impacted by gambling harm be given due consideration against the needs of the other groups which are getting representation on the work group? Please consider adding someone who can speak for the issue of gambling addiction in Maine.

Gambling disorder is called the “Hidden Addiction.” For that reason, most people don’t have an understanding of the problem, and the impact it has on individuals, families, employers, communities, and the state. If I told you the stories of the mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, and friends that I’ve spoken to, it would make compelling testimony. But their stories aren’t mine to tell, and I wouldn’t jeopardize their privacy by trying to convince them to stand before you due to the highly stigmatized nature of gambling disorder. People view those with gambling problems as bad people who can’t control their behavior rather than someone who is struggling with a mental health disorder.

In prior testimony (LD1838), I’ve mentioned that 1.29% of Maine adults are likely to be experiencing gambling problems, according to the 2022 BRFSS Survey. Each of those individuals impact an average of 6 other people.

I've mentioned the lack of research to give us a true understanding of the extent of gambling addiction. In recent years, Massachusetts and Connecticut are 2 nearby states which have conducted research into the impacts of legalized gambling in their states. I recently met with the researcher who did those studies, so I could explore what it would take to conduct such a study in Maine. I found out that the cost would be about \$375,000, but it's understandable when you consider the resources needed to conduct the research and provide expert analysis and reporting. I would like to urge the committee to consider finding a way to pay for such a survey at some point in the near future to help inform as we move forward with future legislation regarding legalized gambling. I've noticed that more states are including requirements for such studies before a new type of gambling is legalized.

When the cascade that is being addressed in LD793 was implemented, the Gambling Addiction Prevention and Treatment Fund was allocated \$100,000 per year. That is much less than all the other items in the cascade. In the **2023 Budget Update: Publicly Funded Problem Gambling Services in the United State: National Association of Administrators for Disordered Gambling Services**, Maine was **36th** in per capita spending on problem gambling.

To put things in perspective, take a look at the **2024 Gambling Control Board, 20th Annual Report** (<https://www.maine.gov/dps/sites/maine.gov.dps/files/inline-files/Annual%20Report%202024%20color.pdf>). You can see that there was \$67,260,928.15 distributed in the 2024 cascade. The line item which states "General Fund **with fixed amount transferred to Gambling Addiction Services** \$7,602,119.69" does not even mention that the "fixed amount" is \$100,000. If you look at the other entities who received funding, the fund for gambling addiction is **by far the lowest recipient**, with many others receiving millions of dollars.

The National Council on Problem Gambling states that for any legalized gambling, at least 1% should be allocated to problem gambling. This cascade was developed long before this was a known "best practice" and if we are adjusting the cascade, it should be adjusted to be in accordance with this current advice.

I am happy to answer any further questions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

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