

## Testimony in Support of SB 363

Public High Schools – Health Education – Gambling Danger and Addiction – February 9, 2022

Dear Chai Pinky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee:

This letter is in support of SB363, which offers an educational plan on gambling and disordered gambling among high school students. SB 363 will require the State Department of Education to collaborate with state agencies and develop an educational curriculum for gambling and disordered gambling for public high school students. SB 363 also allows local school boards an ability to implement this curriculum in high school so that every student access gambling education at least once during grades 9-12. This bill will increase prevention of disordered gambling in the State of Maryland. The rates of disordered gambling among youth are fast exceeding rates of gambling addiction among adults (National Council on Problem Gambling). Research also documents that youth engaged in risky gambling also engage in other risky behaviors (i.e., illegal weapons, substance use, risky sexual behavior) (Zhai et al., 2020) and technological advances with online gambling increases the accessibility and availability of youth gambling which also increases the prevalence of risky gambling among youth (Derevensky & Gilbeau (2019). Research also document correlations between gaming and gambling behavior (Zendle, 2019). Moreover, a longitudinal study of 452 urban African-American youth in Baltimore City from first grade and were followed for 10 years documented that gambling was associated with higher teacher ratings of childhood externalizing behaviors among males and high parent ratings of childhood impulsivity and hyperactivity among both genders (Martins, et al., 2008). This longitudinal study also found a relationship between neighborhood disadvantage (i.e., food and housing insecurity, community violence, poverty) and risky gambling behavior. Passage of SB 363 would provide youth who also experience adversity to also learn prevention education and assistance resources.

The University of Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling implemented a *Smart Choices* prevention intervention among public school youth, and outcome data documented the effectiveness of using a prevention curriculum among youth (Smart Choices Report, 2018). Youth took part in engaged learning activities (i.e., created a youth prevention message for their peers after taking part in a problem gambling prevention curriculum), and these engaged learning prevention activities resulted in increased cognitive and emotional awareness about gambling wellness and risky gambling behaviors. Youth also learned about other risky gateway behaviors that pose a threat to their emerging development and futures.

The Maryland Council on Problem Gambling is a 501-c-3 nonprofit with a mission focused on increasing awareness about problem gambling, advocating for gamblers, affected others and communities, (i.e., faith and spiritual leaders, educators, peer recovery supporters, health professionals), and linking community members to resources in the State of Maryland, such as the confidential help line and gambling treatment). Passage of SB 363 will result in increased community prevention because the education will be standardized across high schools in the State of Maryland. Youth depend on family often to learn about mental health concerns and depending on the family (or community or cultural) awareness, many youths may not learn about gambling wellness and gambling addiction. SB 363 will ensure that **every** high school student learns about gambling and gambling addiction so that they can make better choices about engaging in age-appropriate recreational activities that will not pose a threat

to their developing identities and negatively affect their futures. The Maryland Council on Problem Gambling asks that you please pass SB 363 so that our youth regardless of where they live, what their socioeconomic status, race, or family circumstances are have opportunities to gain experience in healthy ways and can make better decisions when they have critical gambling and gambling addiction education. Thank you.

Submitted by:

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