

Andrea McGovern
Interested Party Testimony
Ohio State Senate Select Committee on Gaming
June 10, 2021

Chairman Schuring, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Craig and members of the Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as an interested party regarding SB176.

I appreciate your time and dedication to these important issues and I would like to provide a local perspective as to how gambling has impacted fellow Ohioans in my community.

We know from the *Ohio Gambling Study* and others' research, that the incidences of problem gambling and addictive gambling have steadily increased in our state in recent years, which certainly appears to correlate with the growing availability of gambling outlets. In my own family, my youngest son's journey to addictive gambling was clearly influenced by the advent of casino gambling in Cleveland. During the following three years, exacerbated by a serious back injury causing chronic pain, Michael McGovern's problem gambling behavior progressed through the need to refinance his car, to cancel his long term life insurance, to sell most of his worldly goods and finally, to defaulting on his mortgage. Hounded by creditors, mostly predatory cash advance lenders, Mike attempted suicide in August, 2013. After this unsuccessful attempt, he was now also diagnosed with PTSD, probably attributable to either the violence of the attempt or the accident which caused the back injury. He was strongly supported by family and began what appeared to be a successful recovery program, but was fired from his job right after Christmas, for unknown reasons. This prompted a slide back into gambling at the casino, and in his despair, Mike shot himself in January 2014, and passed away.

As I look at the impact that gambling has had on my family and community, I want to make sure that resources are available and protections are in place to lessen further harm. In particular, I want to bring to your attention the fact that between 32-35% Of people with gambling disorders either consider or attempt suicide, and 21% of all suicides are gambling related (Hodgins et al, 2006)

I, along with my fellow PGNO members and other concerned citizens, am greatly concerned about the risks of expanding gambling in our state without expanding safeguards to protect the fortunes, mental health and the very lives of players. Based on my experience and education in this subject, I expect these safeguards to include at the least age verification, dedicated funds for services to treat people who become problem gamblers or gambling addicts, and strong requirements for staff/volunteer training at venues. Better staff training at Cleveland's casino might have saved my son's life in the days before his suicide.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as an interested party. I look forward to working with you further on these, and other, important issues impacting Ohioans.

Andrea McGovern