

**HB 1114**

Chairman Bekkedahl and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee,

My name is Lisa Vig. I am a Licensed Addiction Counselor and Internationally Certified Gambling Counselor. I have been providing treatment services to problem gamblers and their family members for over 30 years, primarily with Lutheran Social Services of ND and most recently with the ND DHHS Behavioral Health Division.

I am writing today in support of additional funding to address problem gambling and related harms in ND. A continuum of care, much like we have for those struggling with Substance Abuse Disorder is needed. Problem gamblers and affected others are deserving of the same kinds of resources and supports as those with alcohol or drug problems. Problem Gamblers suffer similar harms; mental health struggles, lost or damaged family relations, legal struggles, financial devastation, loss of job, and a high risk for suicide.

Currently, there are limited prevention and early intervention efforts. This results in the rapid progression of a gambling disorder. By the time many problem gamblers seek help, they often need a more structured program and/or an inpatient setting to stabilize and address suicidality. We have limited availability for counseling and treatment throughout the State with only 3 trained counselors currently offering services. Problem Gamblers would also benefit from the support of Peer Recovery Specialists as well as sober living arrangements, much like those that are available for substance abuse clients.

We've made great strides in creating a continuum of care for those struggling with substance abuse, allowing them the greatest opportunity for a successful recovery. Effectively treating problem gamblers requires the same commitment and effort. Surely, with the overwhelming dollars generated from gambling activities in ND, more direct consideration could be given to support and help those who are damaged and harmed because of their involvement in gambling activity.

Please contact me if you have questions or require additional information about problem gambling.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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