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To: Senate Judiciary
From: Christopher Dodson, Executive Director
Subject: HCR 3002 — Sports Gambling
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The North Dakota Catholic Conference opposes House Concurrent Resolution 3002.

Although the Catholic Church does not teach that mere games of chance are immoral, gambling can harm the human person and undermine the common good. For this reason, the North Dakota Catholic Conference has long opposed any expansion of gambling in North Dakota.

If approved by the voters, HCR 3002 would greatly expand gambling in the state.¹ Constitutional provisions are usually permissive, using “may.” The provision permitting the legalization of charitable gaming is such a provision. HCR 3002, however, uses “shall” and if passed by the voters, *mandates* the Legislative Assembly to legalize all “sports betting.” It is questionable whether the legislature could set wager limits or restrict “sports betting” to professional sports.

HCR 3002 would also require the legislature to legalize, for the first time in the state’s history, for-profit gambling operations. This unprecedented shift in legalized gambling in North Dakota poses even greater threats to families, those who suffer from gambling addictions, and the common good than the mere expansion of charitable gaming in the state.

Finally, we must recognize that sports gambling, particularly for-profit sports gambling, is substantively different from betting on mere games of chance. Sport is special because it is a human activity and all that surrounds sports should always be centered on respecting the dignity of the human person. Sports gambling, however, commodifies the human person.

Moreover, it does this without the athlete’s consent. Sports gambling, especially when facilitated by commercial operators, not only diminishes the sport but also disrespects the dignity, perhaps even exploits, the athlete.

We urge a **Do Not Pass** recommendation on HCR 3002.

¹ Some argue that HCR 3002 merely places the question on the ballot and leaves it to the voters to decide the issue. While this is true to some extent, it is not an argument for passing HCR 3002. Such an argument ignores that Art. IV, Sec. 16 of the North Dakota Constitution, which requires proposed amendments to the constitution to pass both chambers, exists for a reason. The legislature is not supposed to be a mere pass-through for any proposed amendment.