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To: Senate Judiciary Committee
From: David Tamsiea, Executive Director
Re: Senate Bill 2376 - Tribal Casino in Grand Forks
Date: February 5, 2025

The North Dakota Catholic Conference opposes Senate Bill 2376 that seeks to establish a tribal casino in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

Although the Catholic Church teaches that games of chance or wagers are not in themselves immoral, they become morally unacceptable when they deprive a person of what is necessary to provide for his or her own needs or those of others.¹ Today, gambling carries a high risk of becoming an enslavement and addiction.

With their flashing lights, free-flowing alcoholic drinks, all-night hours and generally intoxicating atmosphere, casinos are more likely than other gambling options to lead to bad decisions and catastrophic losses for patrons, particularly those prone to problem or compulsive gambling.

Furthermore, the erosive affect of widespread availability of gambling can undermine the common good. When gambling as a revenue stream becomes overly prevalent in a society, the risks associated with problem gambling multiply. Studies repeatedly show increased crime, personal bankruptcies, and addiction rates associated with casinos and expanded gambling opportunities.

Evidence is growing to suggest that young people, especially young men, are among those particularly vulnerable to gambling addiction.² People in their early twenties are also the fastest growing group of gamblers, according to recent research. Starting young carries a relatively high burden of psychological distress and increased chances of developing problems.

SB 2376 would expand gambling in North Dakota in an area populated by around 15,000 college students. By situating a casino near the University of North Dakota, it would make gambling much too easy to access for young people away from home for the first time and at an age when they are more prone to develop gambling problems, especially young men.

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* No. 2413.

² Emily Sohn, "How gambling affects the brain and who is most vulnerable to addiction," American Psychological Association website, at <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/07/how-gambling-affects-the-brain> (accessed February 4, 2025).

The state has a duty to protect and uphold the dignity of the human person and to promote the common good. This means protecting our young people from the harms of gambling.

We urge a **Do Not Pass** recommendation on SB 2376.