CHAIRPERSON JAMES: If we're ready, our first speaker is Keith Arnold. Welcome.

MR. ARNOLD: Yes, thank you. Good afternoon. I'm the director of Outreach Sierra Treatment Center here in Tucson, Arizona which specializes in the treating of compulsive gambling as well as other addictions and disorders; drugs, alcohol, eating disorder, depression. My purpose here today is to give you some insight into the negative effects and consequences of gambling on this small but important part of the population which is growing.

Out of the 431 patients that have sought treatment at Sierra Tucson this year only three have come in with a primary diagnosis of compulsive gambling. However, when we look at cross addictions, about 18 percent of our patient population suffers from some form of gambling abuse. Given the hundreds of calls we receive on a dedicated 888 LAST BET line, and only treating three patients is dismal, a dismal percentage.

One of the reasons for this is that insurance does not reimburse for the treatment of compulsive gambling even though compulsive gambling is recognized as a psychiatric disorder referred to as an impulse control disorder under the DMS4. Also by the time gamblers reach out to call, they've pretty much lost everything. Estimates run from about 1.7 percent to 7.3 percent of the population, adult population, is addicted to gambling. We should remember that also there are 10 to 15 other people adversely effected by this one person.

Problem gambling is a major public problem that is beginning to receive attention as more states allow gambling, as the Internet proliferates opportunities and as Las Vegas covertly
attracts families who bear a future generation of compulsive addicts. As Sierra Tucson we see two different types of gamblers, the action gambler and the relief gambler. The action gambler tends to be male, high functioning, skilled, focused on power and money. These people tend to have a coexisting condition; drugs, alcohol, sex.

The relief gambler is usually female, retired, video poker player. This segment is the fastest growing and of most concern as the elderly gamble away their social security and life savings. For relief gamblers, it's not about money, it's about depression.

If the government is going to continue to allow the proliferation of casinos and various forms of betting, it has responsibility to take care of this percent of the population most severely effected by the disease and mandate insurance coverage, federal and state programs and responsible gaming programs. The potential danger of compulsive gambling is its hidden disease. There are no physical symptoms associated with the addiction until the late stages. There are no odors, no stumbling, no slurring, just devastation resulting in forgery, embezzlement, robbery, prostitution, incarceration and suicide.

The concern is not how many compulsive gamblers Sierra Tucson treats in one year, but how many thousands out there go untreated. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Thank you very much, Mr. Arnold. I'd like to assure all of the -- all of you who will testify in this public comment section that even though some of the Commissioners are not present, that all of your testimony
will be in the transcript and will be considered by all of the Commissioners.

I understand that Governor Romero and Governor Lujan are not present; is that correct?