

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21 CHAIRPERSON JAMES:

22 Mr. Brad Hill? Scott Sternburg?

23 Can I ask that the next seven speakers, and you should

24 have the list in front of you, go ahead and move over,

1 so we can get a sense of who is here and who is not?

2 Thank you.

3 Mr. Forman?

4 MR. FORMAN: Good afternoon. Madame Chair  
5 and fellow Commissioners, I am Dana Forman, a writer  
6 for the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling.

7 I understand there are two ways for  
8 governments to raise large amounts of revenues, number  
9 one through taxes, number two through legalized  
10 gambling, and that of the two, gambling is considered  
11 painless. The problem is, four or five percent of the  
12 general population cannot gamble in safety.

13 Over the past several years, I've listened  
14 to problem gamblers share their experiences, many have  
15 stories of devastation and to alcoholics and drug  
16 addicts, many have been dually addicted. I've heard  
17 people say, it was very hard giving up the booze and  
18 the drugs, but this gambling business is impossible.  
19 The reason, after alcoholics and drug abusers have  
20 taken their 14 and 15th drink or pill or hit, they are  
21 bound to get sick or pass out. But when gamblers place  
22 their 14th or 15th bet, they actually have a chance of  
23 recouping their losses. And that is the insidious hook

1    which    makes    quitting    the    addiction    exceedingly  
2    difficult.

3                   Some gamblers seek help only after hitting  
4    bottom, much like the alcoholic who is arrested for a  
5    crime while under the influence, or the drug addict who  
6    overdoses.    Recently, I talked with a man in his 20s  
7    who rang up a \$50 thousand tab with a notorious  
8    underworld figure.    When the man couldn't pay, his life  
9    was threatened.    The last I heard, he was on the run in  
10   another part of the country.

11                  Several times I've heard stories of  
12   gamblers who lost not one, but two and three cars, not  
13   one, but two and three houses, not one but two and  
14   three businesses, and not one but two and three  
15   spouses.    I've heard stories of parents cashing in  
16   their children's savings bonds and robbing their piggy  
17   banks.

18                  I've heard of parents en route to the fast  
19   food restaurant who stopped first at the convenience  
20   store for scratch tickets, after the last dollar was  
21   gone, the kids in the car were hungry or the kids went  
22   without clothes or diapers or medical care or  
23   toothpaste, you plug in the necessity.

1           I've once heard the story of a young mother  
2   who sold custody of her young child to her husband, in  
3   exchange for a gambling stake of \$3,000.

4           Compulsive gamblers risk a lot more than  
5   money, they can lose their emotional stability, their  
6   mental health, their spirituality, their physical  
7   health, their freedom and sometimes their lives, when  
8   the thought of suicide appears more appealing than  
9   facing the emotional and financial wreckage.

10           Massachusetts has a population of about six  
11   million. Let's say there are about three million  
12   adults. If only four percent have a gambling problem,  
13   that's a 120,000, that's a 120,000 people that will  
14   take good money, intended for normal expenditures like  
15   mortgages and rents, health care, car repairs,  
16   insurance, education, clothes, vacations et cetera, and  
17   flush it down an economic black hole.

18           If you want to see first hand the effects  
19   of gambling on a neighborhood, take a ride a few miles  
20   north of Boston to the city of Revere and check out the  
21   houses near Wonderland dog track, the Shirley Avenue  
22   section, which 20 years ago was a respectable middle  
23   class neighborhood, is now a virtual slum. Certainly  
24   there were other contributing factors but that track

1   sucked, and continues to suck, the economic lifeblood  
2   out of that community.

3                   CHAIRPERSON JAMES:   Thank you.   I'm going  
4   to ask you to stop there and submit the rest of your  
5   testimony in writing and we will review it.

6                   MR.   FORMAN:       Thank you for letting me  
7   speak.

8                   CHAIRPERSON JAMES:   Thank you.