



CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONFERENCE  
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**Public Safety and Security Committee  
Public Hearing, March 3, 2020  
Testimony in  
Opposition to Expansion of Gambling  
(S.B. 21, H.B. 5167, H.B. 5168, H.B. 5189)  
And in Support of  
H.B. 5167 “An Act Concerning Studies of the Effect of Legalized Gambling”  
by  
Christopher Healy, Executive Director**

The Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference, the public policy office of Connecticut’s Catholic Bishops, is **opposed** to the four bills (S.B. 21, H.B. 5167, H.B. 5168, H.B. 5189) being considered by the Public Safety and Security Committee to expand casino and other forms of gambling in Connecticut. In March 2017, the Catholic Bishops of Connecticut issued a statement entitled *A Catholic Perspective on Expanded Gambling in Connecticut*, in which they concluded the expansion of gambling would not be in the interest of the common good for the citizens of the state. In that statement, the bishops clearly addressed the demand for revenue versus the negative impacts of its expansion:

*“We are mindful that the expansion of casinos in Connecticut would be a potential source of new revenue, but revenues are not the sole criterion of the common good. It is the responsibility of government...to consider all the consequences, both positive and negative, for individuals, families and communities.”*

In 2009, a study by the Connecticut Division of Special Revenue brought to light the many negative social and economic impacts of the Indian casinos on the local communities. Although the casinos have been good sources of revenue for the state, the benefits to the surrounding communities are highly questionable, and the income to the State has been in dramatic decline. Additionally, multiple studies show that 35-50% of casino gambling revenue comes from problem and pathological gamblers. In other words, the casino industry’s business model is dependent upon preying on people with gambling problems and up to half the money government obtains from casinos comes from those individuals and the people around them.

The Conference also believes that other forms of legalized gambling, such as sports wagering and internet gambling, have the same negative social impact on society and further exacerbate the problem of gambling addiction. The concerns over gambling addiction, which leads to debt, bankruptcies, broken families and crime, should far outweigh the perceived financial benefits to our state. According to the UConn School of Medicine, the growing gambling epidemic is hitting lower socioeconomic groups the hardest and the resulting societal costs are being borne by employers, law enforcement, social welfare agencies, and the health care system.

Without question, the State of Connecticut is facing a difficult financial period. However, adopting a means to address that issue, which preys on vulnerable people and expounds societal problems, is not the correct approach. It is not an approach that is in line with the common good and best interests of the people of Connecticut.

The Conference does **support** H.B. 5167 which calls for a study of the impact of gambling in our state. This would be the first study since 2009. However, we urge the committee to modify the legislation to insure that the organization chosen to perform the study has no financial connections to the gambling industry. This study must be as unbiased as possible. The legislature should take no further action on expanding gambling in Connecticut at least until this study is complete.