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## **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JOANN BRILES-KLEIN THERAPIST IN PRIVATE PRACTICE**

**Thursday, March 12, 2020**

Chairman Barker, Vice Chair Awerkamp and Members of the Committee

Thank you for the privilege of speaking to you today. I want to express a number of concerns I have regarding the expansion of gambling in Kansas, particularly sports wagering.

I am a therapist in private practice in Wichita Kansas, licensed at the independent practice level for 35 years. One of the areas I have specialized post graduate training and certification in is diagnosing and treating individuals/families struggling with the Behavioral Addiction of Gambling Disorder. I have worked with persons struggling with problem gambling for nearly 20 years.

I am an individual professional member of the Kansas Coalition on Problem Gambling (KCPC) and the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG). Both of these organizations take a neutral position on the expansion of legalized gambling while advocating that any such expansion provides funding for the prevention, treatment, recovery services, and research on this disorder. It is also important and ethical that legislation known to increase the probability of social harm include in it legislatively mandated regulations to help protect and mitigate the harm to those who would be most affected by the legislation, the problem gambler and their loved ones.

Gambling Disorder has been recognized in the DSM and the World Health Organization for decades as a serious disorder and as an important public health issue. Often referred to as the "Hidden Addiction", Gambling Disorder has the highest suicide rate of any clinical population. It is estimated 54 thousand Kansans suffer from this addiction. There is significant scientific and medical research on the neuroscience of this disorder, evidenced based treatment, as well as the social and financial cost to individuals, families, judicial systems, employers, and communities when the rates and severity of Gambling Disorder rises. As a therapist I have witnessed the raw pain of individuals and families in all of these areas secondary to Gambling Disorder.

### **WHAT IS AT STAKE WITH HB 2671**

While many individuals may be able to gamble recreationally and never develop a problem, USA and world-wide scientific prevalence studies on Gambling Disorder indicate the most

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predictive factors of whether or not any one individual is likely to develop a problem with Gambling is access ability, and time spent gambling. Given that reality I feel it is imperative that expanding legalized gambling, specifically sports wagering, take into consideration the social cost to Kansans. Scientific surveys and past experience with expanding casinos in Kansas informs us of the probable increase in crime, bankruptcy, divorce, suicide, and domestic violence secondary to an increase in persons developing a gambling disorder.

Sports betting will provide unprecedented increase in access. Sports are everywhere, participation as a viewer to a limitless supply of sporting events is available 24/7. Technology makes participation limitless through mobile devices, even to children and youth. Advertising urges participation in an endless number of variables to wager on with the ability to do so instantly. This ability of instant, constant, limitless play of sports betting are factors we know from the neuroscience are more likely to create addictive behaviors. It is important that we do everything possible to minimize the risk of problem gambling as Kansas considers legalizing sports wagering or there will be no net benefit to the people of Kansas, socially or economically.

In 2007 Kansas enacted legislation that mandated the State owned Casinos pay 2% of net profits into a fund to mitigate the harmful effects of increased availability of gambling. It was for education, prevention, and treatment of Gambling Disorder and other co-occurring addictions. This was a great step forward. However, because funds were not dedicated to be used for their intended use, over the years only about 10% of the 2% has ever gone to its intended use. This is of great concern. As a therapist I have seen an increase in persons seeking treatment for gambling and an increase in the severity level of their disorder and disruption to their lives. This fund provides no out of pocket treatment to persons with Gambling disorder. It is critical to note that not one penny of the money for treatment is tax payer, state, or charity dollars. Problem gamblers have in effect "paid their treatment forward" in that the funds come from money lost to the casinos in Kansas, and in large part by persons with gambling problems.

As this body considers expanding legalized sports wagering, it is vital to the health of our state to build into the legislation **dedicated funding**, a percentage of net revenues going to research, prevention, and treatment of problem gambling. We can expect an increase in Gambling Disorder with expansion of gambling, especially gambling that is available constantly, without restraint or evidence of legal age from a mobile device.

Given the risks of harm to the public, regulation to safeguard the public and mitigate the harm needs to be clear in the legislation **before** any expansion of sports wagering is enacted. I would

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urge this committee to utilize the nationwide research and trend data available through NCPG to guide Kansas policy, to provide for player self-exclusion, limit setting on financial transactions, and preventing players from obtaining a line of credit from the site on their mobile device. Hopefully legislators and regulators will avail themselves to NCPG's Internet Responsible Gambling Standards best practices if there is legalization expanding internet or mobile device gaming.

You have before you a daunting task. On the one hand there seems to be a tsunami wave of enthusiasm for sports betting and betting online and through mobile devices at the national and state level. It is easy to hear the roar of positive promises regarding the perceived benefits loudly touted. What is not loudly touted is the very real, but more hidden, pain and devastation, socially, economically, and legally that follows the behavioral addition of Gambling Disorder. I urge you to acknowledge the reality of the latter and build safe guards into any legislation you consider to prevent and mitigate the harm. Provide funding, from the money wagered, for prevention, treatment, and research.

I thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any question here or later. My contact information is included. Again thank you for your time, and your work on behalf of Kansans.

Sincerely,

JoAnn Briles-Klein, LSCSW, MBA, KCGC II