

Kansas Department of

Social and Rehabilitation Services

Don Jordan, Secretary

House Federal and State Affairs

March 20, 2007

HB 2478 - Problem Gambling Grant Fund

Health Care Policy

Ray Dalton, Deputy Secretary

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Chair Siegfried and Committee members, I am Ray Dalton, Deputy Secretary of Social and Rehabilitation Services for the Division of Health Care Policy. Thank you for this opportunity to speak about HB 2478.

For most adults, gambling is a source of entertainment, a chance to socialize with others in a fun and safe atmosphere. However, a Harvard Medical School study estimates that 1.6% of adults have experienced serious problems associated with compulsive gambling. They further estimated that an additional 4% of adults had experienced mild to moderate problems with gambling at some point in their lives.

Based on these national estimates, 44,000 to 106,000 Kansas adults may have moderate to serious problems with compulsive gambling at some point in their lifetime. It is also believed that up to 60% of this population may also have co-occurring issues of substance abuse or mental health issues. The data collected by SRS for the Addiction and Prevention Services funded consumers supports this estimate. Based on a screening instrument given to 15,678 consumers assessed for substance abuse, 573 indicated a past or present problem with compulsive gambling. This number correlates with the national estimates of 4 %.

The social cost of compulsive gambling is significant. Compulsive gamblers are more likely than other gamblers or non-gamblers to have been on welfare, declared bankruptcy, and to have been arrested or incarcerated. As gambling losses mount, some compulsive gamblers turn to crimes such as embezzlement or writing bad checks. The impact on the family is no less significant, especially on the children who report their own reactions of depression, anger and sadness and who are at greater risk for abuse and neglect.

The funds provided to SRS through K.S.A.79-4806 (\$80,000 lottery and \$20,000 bingo) are currently utilized for the following initiatives:

- 24 hour helpline which provides crises intervention, assessment, and consultation
- No cost assessments for consumers
- Community information and referral
- Distributing problem gambling information and brochures
- Advertising and public awareness campaigns
- Professional development of the workforce
- Prevention programs targeting at-risk populations such as youth and older adults.

Any additional funds, such as those proposed in this bill, would be utilized by SRS to expand services to cover treatment, especially for the poor. Workforce development would be enhanced by requiring advanced training and education focusing, in part, on improving and expanding the services available for co-occurring consumers. Credentialing, professional standards and best practices of care would be further developed and implemented to improve services to those Kansas residents and their families experiencing compulsive gambling.

Of the 26 States that dedicate funds for the prevention and treatment of compulsive gambling, Kansas ranks 25th. Neighboring states have already legislated similar commitments to this issue: Nebraska (\$1.2 million), Oklahoma (\$1 million) and Missouri (\$489,000).

This concludes my testimony and I stand ready for questions.