

Testimony of Aaron M.
Informational hearing on economic, health and social harms resulting from online sports
gambling
State Senate Finance Committee
January 8, 2025

Members of the Committee,

In preparation for writing this submission, I scoured the web for a good quote on gambling to inspire me and jumpstart my statement. Then I realized my search would result in a lame and futile effort, for there is no good quote on gambling, because after all, gambling is simply no good. It took me thirty regretful years to realize this. Three decades of squandering opportunities, wasting time and money, and not achieving anything worthwhile and instead choosing to continue to gamble.

Hello, my name is Aaron, and I am a compulsive gambler. For me, for the last thirty years the “big win” has consistently been a fleeting illusion; one to be pursued, but never attained. The powers that be in the pro-gambling communities of Las Vegas, Atlantic City, other world wide gaming centers, local tribal casinos, back alley dice games, horse tracks, sports books, and at online casinos would have you believe otherwise. They lead you to believe that you, too, can win. They want you to think that with one simple wager you, too, can eventually lead a lifestyle of the famous and rich. They are lying to all of us. Once you’ve committed that first bet, they’ve got you: hook, line, and sinker. Sure, statistically speaking, some people, sometimes, get lucky. However, if I’ve learned anything along the way in my pathetic gambling career is what we’ve all known from day zero, one way or another: THE HOUSE ALWAYS WINS.

The problem with playing the lottery, sports betting, or gambling in general, is that you cannot win unless you try. Interestingly, we are programmed socially at a young age to never give up and that if at first you don’t succeed, then try, try again. This naturally sets up somewhat of a double standard for any one with an addictive personality. For someone like myself who has no limits or self-restraint, this is very bad advice. My problem, personally, as a compulsive gambler and addict, is that I don’t know when to quit.

Having hit rock bottom multiple times never mattered, because that big win was always just one button push away. Maybe it’s a result of eternal optimism, or maybe it’s the idea of the American dream that is drilled into our head from the time we are able to understand the world around us. But alas, when character challenges that some of us possess like greed and selfishness take over, in the long and short run of things, there is little hope to quit while you’re ahead.

I don’t mean to sound too much like a piece of GA literature, but this is the dream world of the compulsive gambler. The trick is not to be tricked into making that first bet. It is hard to argue that at this point, in the world we live in, it is too easy, too accessible, and too socially accepted. For it is literally at our fingertips, never more than an arms length away.

My gambling addiction has affected my life on a number of levels. Not only has it crippled my financial portfolio, it has stifled my emotional, physical, and spiritual health. More importantly, maybe, it has stunted my personal growth as a human. For years, I have been delinquent on bills, have racked up personal debt, have underachieved in school and at work, have had poor self esteem and resulting mental health, have strained personal and professional

relationships, and have struggled with meeting my basic needs. It is my opinion that gambling, especially in the case of young people, is a very slippery slope. It has ruined countless lives and needs to be curtailed or limited immediately before it affects more lives in a negative way.