



**Written Testimony of Derek Longmeier
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**United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Consumer Protection, Technology, and Data Privacy Subcommittee
May 20, 2026**

Dear Chairwoman Blackburn, Ranking Member Hickenlooper, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you, Chairwoman Blackburn and Ranking Member Hickenlooper, for holding this important hearing. I write on behalf of the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG), the sole national advocate for those suffering from problem gambling and their loved ones, to submit this testimony regarding sports betting, game integrity, and problem gambling in the United States.

NCPG's mission is to lead awareness and advocacy efforts to reduce gambling harm. Our vision is to advance wellbeing by minimizing harm from gambling problems. Since NCPG was founded in 1972, we have remained neutral, neither for nor against legalized gambling, and completely nonpartisan. NCPG members include 36 state affiliate chapters and a wide variety of individuals and organizations—from counselors, prevention specialists and researchers to people in recovery from gambling problems as well as treatment clinics, gambling operators and vendors, regulatory authorities, sports leagues and state human services agencies. We speak on behalf of those who suffer from a gambling addiction and for those in recovery who must remain anonymous.

Problem Gambling and its Overlap with Sports Integrity

Problem gambling or gambling addiction is characterized by increasing preoccupation with and loss of control over gambling and continued gambling despite serious negative consequences. Gambling addiction (or gambling disorder) is a recognized mental health condition in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition. Gambling problems are highly co-occurring with substance abuse and other mental health problems. In fact, gambling addiction has the highest rate of suicide of any addiction, and the estimated annual social cost to families and communities from gambling-related addiction, bankruptcy and crime is \$14 billion.

NCPG has concerns about the impact of gambling on the health of athletes, as nearly all of the limited research that exists indicates that elite athletes are more likely to be at risk for gambling

addiction.¹ This is not surprising given that data consistently shows athletes are gambling at high rates, often on sports. One study from Europe found that 57% of professional athletes gambled on sports in the past year.² In addition, athletes tend to be competitive, and more willing to take risks, which are known risk factors for developing a gambling problem.³

Preventing and treating gambling addiction among players protects their health and preserves the integrity of the game. Multiple instances of professional athletes intentionally compromising game integrity have stemmed from the athlete having a serious gambling problem and needing to make extra money to feed their addiction or relieve them of obligations to their bookie.⁴ Professional sports organizations, as well as the NCAA, should, therefore, provide comprehensive gambling addiction prevention and education programs to all players and team personnel. In addition, however, both the state and federal government have a role to play in ensuring citizens are exposed to responsible gambling education and have access to resources should they develop a gambling problem.

Gambling and Problem Gambling are Not Just State Issues

Since the Supreme Court struck down the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA) in 2018, 39 states and the District of Columbia have legalized sports betting either at brick-and-mortar locations or online and on mobile devices. This has proven to be the largest and fastest expansion of gambling in our nation's history. All but two of the Senators on this Subcommittee have legalized sports betting in their state, whether it be in-person or mobile, whereas none did in 2018. For all Senators on this Subcommittee, whether their state has legalized sports betting or not, your constituents are now exposed to ads for sports betting frequently on broadcast television, radio and podcasts, online, and in print. In addition, sports event contract derivatives offered on prediction markets have emerged over the past year-and-a-half as more than a fringe activity for those who choose to gamble, and are currently legal nationwide, even in states that have not legalized sports betting. Betting, using traditional sports books and now prediction markets, is an engrained component of college and professional sports.

The unprecedented expansion of sports betting and the recent emergence of event contract derivatives on sporting events highlights that gambling is a national issue, no longer just a state one. Problem gambling is also a national public health issue. While the federal government is now regulating sports betting via prediction markets overseen by the Commodity Futures

¹ Håkansson A, Durand-Bush N, Kenttä G. Problem Gambling and Problem Gaming in Elite Athletes: a Literature Review. *Int J Ment Health Addict*. 2021 Dec 1:1-17. PMID: 34867124; PMCID: PMC8634748.

² Grall-Bronnec M, Caillon J, Humeau E, Perrot B, Remaud M, Guilleux A, Rocher B, Sauvaget A, Bouju G. Gambling among European professional athletes. Prevalence and associated factors. *J Addict Dis*. 2016 Oct-Dec;35(4):278-290. Epub 2016 Apr 25. PMID: 27111296.

³ Curry, T. J., & Jiobu, R. M. (1995). Do motives matter? Modeling gambling on sports among athletes. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 12(1), 21-35.

⁴ See e.g. ESPN News Services, Lawyer: Jontay Porter was 'in over his head' with Gambling Addiction, available at: https://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/40300820/fourth-man-arrested-betting-scheme-involving-jontay-porter

Trading Commission (CFTC)—there is no federal spending outside of the military context whatsoever on preventing or treating gambling addiction, programs that could help players before they get into a situation where they intentionally compromise game integrity. Put another way, states receive no support for combatting the disease of gambling addiction from any federal health agencies. This is why passing the bipartisan Providing Opportunities for Individuals in Need of Treatment and Support (POINTS) Act is the single most important action Congress can take to address the negative impacts of expanded sports betting and legalized gambling in general.

Unregulated Legal Gambling

NCPG takes no stand and makes no argument as to whether trading event contract derivatives on sports does or does not *legally* constitute gambling. However, from our over 50 years of experience in the field, expertise in problem gambling, and conversations with researchers, clinicians, and individuals in recovery, we are certain that trading event contract derivatives for most retail customers is *functionally* gambling. Trading event contract derivatives includes the three elements of gambling. These are: Consideration (customer must use money or something of value to participate), Chance (the result of the contract is not 100% certain as the event has not occurred), and Prize (the customer will earn more money or value than they risked if they are successful).

Any activity that is functionally gambling, including trading event contract derivatives, can cause gambling harm to individuals and their loved ones. It makes no difference to NCPG what the activity is legally called, whether it be trading or gambling, we know that it is functionally gambling and, therefore, must be regulated with substantially similar protections to what we see states and tribal governments implement with respect to traditional gambling. NCPG is neutral as to the legalization of gambling, but we are not neutral as to the regulation of gambling. Thus, we urge Congress to ensure this activity is thoroughly regulated to protect all customers.

In April, NCPG submitted a 12-page public comment to the CFTC’s proposed rulemaking for prediction markets.⁵ In it, we detailed the consumer protections that we believe must be included in any gambling app, whether it be traditional sports betting regulated by a state or prediction market trading regulated by the CFTC. NCPG believes the CFTC must include requirements in the rules for robust responsible gambling standards that prioritize customer health for all platforms offering event contract derivatives to retail customers. The CFTC should look to NCPG guidelines of best practices for internet gambling operators and regulators known as the Internet Responsible Gambling Standards (IRGS). Although originally written for traditional gambling, the IRGS is almost entirely applicable to event contract derivatives and prediction markets, and NCPG is currently working to make the document completely applicable. These recommendations include things like the encouragement and ability for customers to set

⁵ See here:

https://comments.cftc.gov/PublicComments/CommentList.aspx?id=7654&ctl00_ctl00_cphContentMain_MainContent_gvCommentListChangePage=1

personalized time and budget limits and easy-to-access time-out and self-exclusion programs. Other topics covered include but are not limited to: a corporate commitment from the operator to responsible gambling; easy access to help via the National Problem Gambling Helpline™ (1-800-MY-RESET), responsible advertising that does not target vulnerable populations, and setting the age to participate at 21 years old. The IRGS serves as a roadmap for the CFTC, Congress, and prediction market platforms to prioritize customer health and ensure the activity is offered, promoted, and conducted responsibly. We encourage you to read the full public comment submitted to the CFTC.

The widespread promotion and access to prediction markets will lead to gambling problems for some individuals. Participation puts an individual at risk for developing a gambling problem. Given this, we urge Congress to ensure trading event contract derivatives is regulated using the IRGS in order to prioritize player health and safety.

Problem Gambling is in Every State and Congressional District

Available evidence points to increases in gambling problems among Americans. Although there has not been a nationwide gambling addiction prevalence survey in decades, most states that have conducted prevalence surveys are seeing their rates of gambling problems increasing. For example, in Indiana, a 2022 survey found that 2.3% of adults were classified as having a gambling disorder.⁶ The same survey just two years later found that the number of adults classified as having a gambling disorder had increased to 3.4%.⁷ In addition, in states where studies have not been able to conclude whether overall prevalence rates have increased, they are finding high rates of gambling problems overall. A 2023 study in New Jersey found that “the overall rate of high-risk problem gambling, which best correlates to gambling disorder, was just under 6%, nearly three times the rate in a majority of population surveys in the United States and abroad.”⁸

As we have learned from my home state of Ohio’s gambling prevalence surveys, there is a correlation between increased access to gambling and increased rates of problem gambling. In 2012, prior to the legalization of casinos and racinos, 5% of Ohioans were considered at-risk for developing a gambling problem.⁹ Then, in 2022, after casinos and racinos had been legalized, and there was expansion of gambling through the legalization of daily fantasy sports, e-bingo slot machines, and keno, the survey showed that 19.8% of Ohio adults were at-risk for

⁶ Jun, M., Lay, M., Reynolds, D., & Lee, J. (2023). Adult Gambling Behaviors in Indiana - 2022. Bloomington, IN: Prevention Insights.

⁷ Jun, M., Lay, M., Reynolds, D., & Lee, J. (2025). Adult Gambling Behaviors in Indiana - 2024. Bloomington, IN: Prevention Insights.

⁸ Nower, L., Stanmyre, J.F. & Anthony, V. (2023). The Prevalence of Online and Land-Based Gambling in New Jersey. Report to the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement. New Brunswick, NJ: Authors.

⁹ Survey Available at:

<https://dbh.ohio.gov/static/Portals/0/assets/FamiliesChildrenandAdults/Get%20Help/Problem%20Gambling/2012SurveyofAt-RiskandProblemGamblingPrevalenceamongOhioans.pdf>

developing a gambling problem.¹⁰ This represents approximately 1.8 million Ohio adults. Importantly, the 2022 Ohio Gambling Survey, conducted by the Ohio Department of Behavioral Health, was completed before the launch of legal sports wagering in the state. Since that survey, Ohio's gambling landscape has continued to rapidly expand through legalized sports wagering, offshore unregulated betting sites, and now the emergence of event contract derivatives offered on prediction market platforms. We eagerly await the 2027 Ohio Gambling Survey to see the current rates for those at-risk for a gambling problem.

NCPG works closely with treatment providers and individuals in recovery from gambling addiction and continue to hear their concerns about the rise of gambling-related problems. NCPG's 2024 National Survey on Gambling Attitudes and Gambling Experiences (NGAGE) revealed troubling trends, including that the risk for gambling problems is concentrated heavily among young male online sports bettors. In 2024, 24% of fantasy sports bettors and 17% of traditional sports bettors met at least one criterion for problematic gambling behavior.

While sports betting and prediction markets continue to garner recent public attention, NGAGE shows most Americans did not place a sports bet in the past 12 months. It remains important to recognize that problematic gambling behavior extends well beyond sports. The most significant predictors of risk identified in 2024 include participation in many different gambling activities, agreeing that gambling is a good way to make money, participation in sports betting (either traditional sports betting or fantasy sports), and being male and/or under the age of 35. However, we cannot determine the degree that these factors cause problem gambling, especially as they are often highly correlated to one another. These complex factors demand a broader national response, something the federal government should lead on.

Public Health Response

Public health is the science of protecting and improving the health of communities and populations to reduce disease and improve health in communities. A public health approach uses a combination of science and social techniques and involves partnerships with communities, health and social services, industry, academia, and the media. We must look intently but critically at other countries' policies to ensure our solutions are embedded in our nation's cultural, political, and economic systems. In the same way it has become part of our cultural ethos not to drink and drive, we can make gambling in a responsible way the norm. We recognize that state and tribal governments have historically overseen gambling in accordance with legal precedent. At the same time, emerging technology has created a way to gamble that is currently overseen by the federal government. NCPG will continue partnering with all levels of government and all other stakeholders as we all work towards solutions that minimize gambling-related harm.

¹⁰ Survey Summary Available at: https://dbh.ohio.gov/static/learnandfindhelp/gethelpnow/problem-gambling/2022-Ohio-Gambling-Survey-Highlights_10182023.pdf

States Have Not Sufficiently Invested in Problem Gambling Services

Many state governments have never invested in their problem gambling programs or broad public health infrastructure. In May 2024, the National Association of Administrators for Disordered Gambling Services (NAADGS) reported that \$134M in public funding had been invested in state problem gambling programs in 2023, a historic high. Yet, that still represents only 50 cents per capita. To put it another way, for every dollar states have generated from commercial gambling, .0009 cents were invested in problem gambling services. It is critical that every state has robust and well-funded gambling addiction prevention, education, and treatment services.

Public Health is a shared responsibility between the states and federal government. Yet, there are currently no federal funds dedicated to addressing gambling addiction in the United States outside of the military context, despite the federal government profiting significantly from taxes on both gambling winnings and sports bets. NCPG has long said that all who profit from sports betting are ethically obligated to devote a percentage of their profits to gambling harm reduction, and the federal government is no exception—the federal government profits from legalized sports betting. Since the 1950s, the federal government has levied an excise tax of 0.25% on all money wagered on sports in the United States, equating to one penny in tax for every 4 dollars wagered. According to NCPG estimates based on publicly available data, the federal excise tax on sports betting currently generates \$200-300 million a year. That money does not go towards specific programs or services but is simply deposited into the general fund.

Congress Can Pass Federal Funding

NCPG strongly supports HR 7875, The Providing Opportunities for Individuals in Needs of Treatment and Support (POINTS) Act, introduced by Erin Houchin (R-IN), Andrea Salinas (D-OR), Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA) and Troy Carter (D-LA). The POINTS Act is the first bipartisan bill introduced in Congress to devote resources to preventing and treating gambling addiction in nearly 15 years. The bill provides critical funding to problem gambling programs that are the foundation of responsible gambling initiatives. The bill is funded by dedicating a portion of the federal sports betting excise tax to grants aimed at prevention, education, treatment, and recovery. The POINTS Act returns to states and tribes a third of the sports betting excise tax revenue. By dedicating these funds to mitigating the costs of gambling addiction, NCPG estimates that every dollar spent to prevent and treat gambling problems will save state governments at least two dollars in gambling-related criminal justice, bankruptcy, and healthcare costs.

One of the most significant benefits of the POINTS Act is the potential for increased access to treatment for individuals struggling with gambling addiction. By allowing states to apply for funding for state health departments they will be better able to address gambling addiction through programs that best resonate with their unique communities. The POINTS Act will help ensure those in need have access to the support and resources necessary to buttress responsible

gambling programs. The POINTS Act does not increase taxes; it simply sets aside a funding stream for problem gambling prevention and treatment.

NCPG believes that passing the POINTS Act is the most important first step that the federal government can take to enshrine gambling addiction as a matter of public health. It would provide the first-ever dedicated federal funding for programs to prevent and treat gambling addiction. By raising the bar in states that apply for and receive grants, it would give athletes, as well as all individuals, better opportunities to learn about problem gambling and have access to help before they make a disastrous decision.

Harm Also Comes from Black Market Sites

Even as legal sports betting expands at the state and federal level, there is still a vast amount of gray and black-market gambling and sports betting occurring in each and every state, resulting in considerable confusion among consumers. Young men (including athletes) on college campuses are often bombarded with offers to gamble on these sites. Many of these sites advertise in traditional media and use celebrities to promote them. We call on Congress to ensure all sites that offer gambling products are regulated, as well as to crack down on illegal black-market sites.

Conclusion

It is clear to us that the expansion of gambling at the state level, and now the federal level, has not been uniformly accompanied by appropriate—or in some cases any—funds to prevent or treat gambling addiction. As a result, the existing public problem gambling prevention and treatment services are insufficient in most states and nonexistent in many. This impacts athletes across the nation who are dealing with a gambling problem and results in those athletes being more likely to look at compromising game integrity as a solution to their problems.

The evidence that expanded sports betting has led to increased harm on a national scale is clear. This rapid expansion and its accompanying harm demands a public health response based on prevention, treatment, and research partnerships amongst all stakeholders and everyone who profits from legalized gambling. This includes the federal government. It is essential for Congress to come together and pass the bipartisan POINTS Act. This practical and commonsense legislation is the single most important action Congress can take to address the negative impacts of expanded sports betting and legalized gambling in general. In addition, Congress should work to ensure emerging platforms, like trading event contract derivatives, are thoroughly regulated to prioritize consumer health. On behalf of the 9 million Americans directly suffering from gambling-related harm and the millions more who are indirectly affected, including family members, coworkers, and friends, we ask the Committee to enact lifesaving change by supporting the passage of the first-ever federal funding stream to prevent and treat gambling addiction.