

House Office Building
124 N Capitol Ave, Lansing, MI 48933
Room 521

Mike Burke Oral Testimony in FAVOR of: House Bill 4686

Good morning Chair Weber, and members of this committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Michael Burke and I am the executive director of the Michigan Association on problem gambling. I serve on the Board of Directors for the National Council on Problem Gambling, and I am a gambling addict currently in my 20th year of recovery.

The Michigan Association on problem gambling and the National Council remain neutral as it

relates to legal gambling. MAPG is an all-volunteer, not-for-profit organization comprised of gambling clinicians, trainers, Researchers, Michigan's gambling industry stakeholders, and individuals, like myself, who are in recovery. The Michigan Association and the national Council have also filed joint testimony today regarding House Bill 4686. This bill seeks to modernize the disassociated persons list for problem gamblers who have voluntarily declared that they will no longer visit Detroit casinos. It is also commonly known as the casino self-exclusion list.

Problem Gambling is an important public health

concern and includes any form of gambling behavior that damages personal, family or vocational pursuits. The essential features of problem gambling are increasing preoccupation with gambling, a need to bet more money more frequently, restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop “chasing” losses, and loss of control manifested by continuation of the gambling behavior in spite of mounting, serious, negative consequences. In extreme cases, Problem gambling can result in financial ruin, legal problems, loss of career and family, or even suicide.

The vast majority of people within Michigan will never experience gambling problems, but for the estimated 1 to 2% of individuals who will suffer the negative consequences of problem gambling, we must support and empower them by giving them access to the best tools possible. This bill is designed to assist in that effort.

“Problem gambling has been defined as an uncontrollable *urge* to gamble despite negative consequences or desire to stop” (Dr. Richard Rosenthal). Many problem gamblers have used the state self-exclusion program as a way to control this urge.

Unfortunately, current law provides individuals with but one option to exclude themselves from the three Detroit casinos; a lifetime ban. To the average person, a permanent self-imposed ban makes perfect sense. But we know that only offering a lifetime ban will act as a deterrent to many problem gamblers, as they may want help but feel a lifetime ban is so dramatic and unobtainable that it's not worth even trying.

The chains of a gambling addiction are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken. This is the exact position that many gamblers find themselves in when they start to seek help for their

problem. For the disordered gambler in crisis, the possibility of coming off the list after five years may provide them with just the right amount of motivation to take advantage of the program and exclude themselves from gambling. To be most effective, the disassociated persons program should ensure that the individual seeks treatment so he or she can fully understand their loss of control over gambling and what steps they can take to make sure that it doesn't happen in the future.

House Bill 4686 provides individuals with a lifetime ban, but also provides the option for an individual to remove themselves from the self-exclusion list after

five years. After the five-year period has elapsed, the problem gambler must proactively reinstate themselves by way of the Michigan Gaming Control Board. The individual will not be automatically allowed to re-enter a Detroit casino.

The general purpose of the self-exclusion program is to assist the gambler in dealing with the uncontrollable urge to gamble. Under ideal conditions, a self-exclusion will allow the gambler the time and opportunity to step back from gambling and engage in extensive treatment. Again the individual must wait five years before they can make the decision for themselves.

Together, with all the industry stakeholders, the challenge before us now is to implement measures to reduce the harms associated with gambling, and this legislation seeks to do exactly that.

Thank you Chair Webber and members of the committee for this opportunity to speak. We would like to submit these remarks for the record. MAPG is available to this committee whenever it is convenient to continue this important discussion. I am happy to try and answer any questions you may have now or after the hearing thank you.

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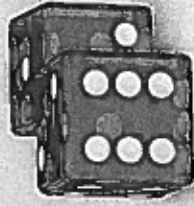
Common Gambling Myths

MYTH: Playing every day will increase my chances of winning.

FACT: The chances of winning on any day are exactly the same as the day before. Gambling games are random, so playing every day makes no difference.

MYTH: If I keep gambling, my luck will change and I'll win back the money I've lost.

FACT: Continuing to gamble with the hopes of winning back lost money is referred to as "chasing" and does not increase your chances of winning. Each time you place a bet, the odds are no more in your favor than they were the last time.



Resources

MI Problem Gambling Helpline
1-800-270-7117

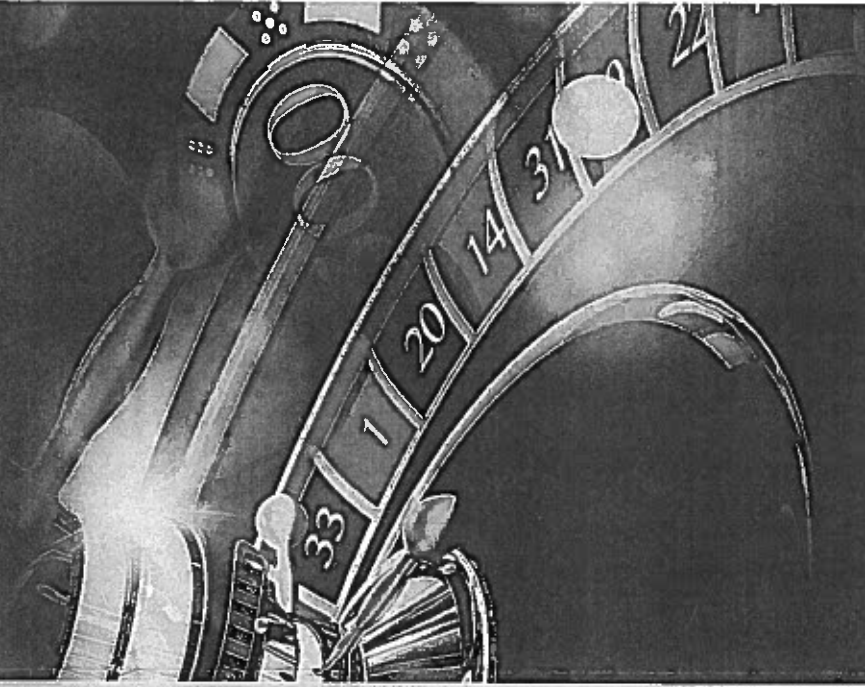
**Michigan Association on
Problem Gambling (MAPG)**
www.michapg.com

National Council on Problem Gambling
1-800-522-4700
www.ncpgambling.org

Gamblers Anonymous
www.gamblersanonymous.org
GAM-ANON
www.gam-anon.org

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LEARN THE WARNING SIGNS
AND HOW TO GET HELP



KEEPING IT FUN AND SAFE
Play Responsibly

MAPG MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION
ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

MDHHS
Michigan Department of Health & Human Services

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FUN AND SAFE**

Help is available 24/7: Call 1-800-270-7117

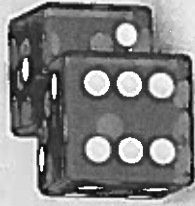
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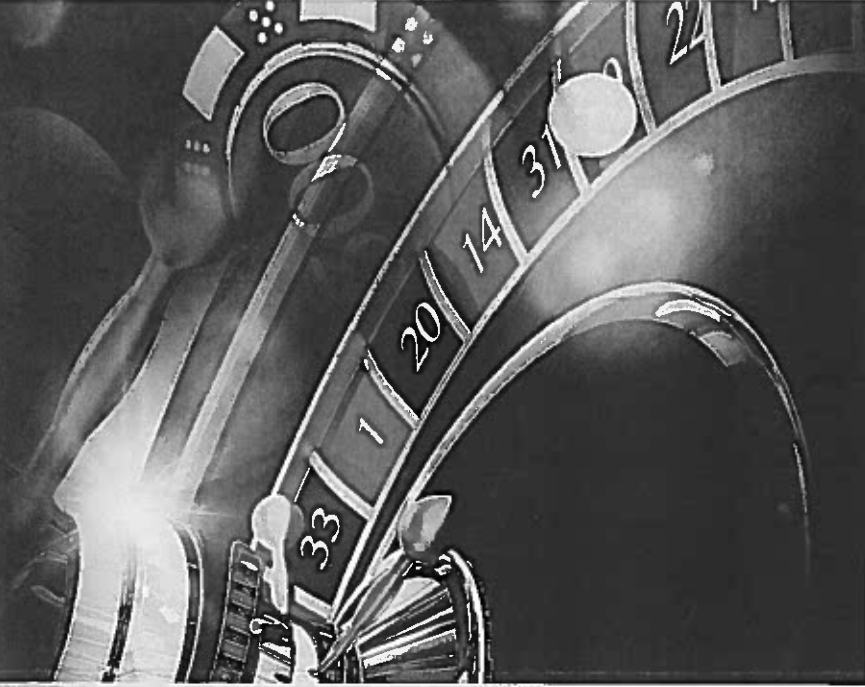
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