

March 20, 2024

Joint Religious Legislative Coalition
P.O. Box 4233
Saint Paul, MN 55104

Re: HF2000- Sports betting authorized and provided.

Dear Chair Klevorn and members of the State and Local Government Finance and Policy Committee,

I am writing to express the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition's concerns with HF2000. JRLC is a state-wide coalition formed through the partnership of our four sponsoring faith organizations: the Islamic Center of Minnesota, the Jewish Community Relations Council, the Minnesota Catholic Conference, and the Minnesota Council of Churches.

As people of faith, we advocate alongside our neighbors of differing religious backgrounds to address poverty, uphold the dignity of overlooked communities, and mitigate societal harm.

Our coalition is very concerned about the impact HF2000 will have on people dealing with gambling addictions. While some people may be able to enjoy sports betting as a form of entertainment, we want to emphasize that this not the case for a significant portion of Minnesotans.

- According to a 2020 survey but the Wilder Foundation and the MN Department of Human Services, 1.3% of adults in Minnesota are problem gamblers, which represents just over 56,000 adults. – An additional 3.8% (nearly 162,000 adults) are at-risk gamblers. Another 22% of people had been negatively impacted by the addiction of a loved one or someone they know. This is before the sweeping legalization we are discussing now.

Legalizing sports betting, daily fantasy sports and mobile gaming would bring access to gambling into every home, school and workplace in our state, 24 hours a day. We believe this will create more problem gamblers, particularly amongst our young people, and intensify the struggle of those already dealing gambling addictions and their families.

In a recent Newsweek article titled, "These Are the Real Dangers of the Sports Betting Boom for Young Men," the publication discovered alarming increases in people seeking help for problem gambling in states that had recently legalized online betting.

- In Connecticut, helpline calls jumped 91 percent in the first year after legalization; in Massachusetts, calls are up 276 percent since 2020; in Ohio, which just opened the door to legal sports betting in January, calls to the state's problem gambling hotline tripled in the first month alone compared to the same period last year; in the first year after Virginia legalized sports gambling, calls climbed 387 percent; in Illinois, calls rose 425 percent between 2020 and 2022

We ask you to carefully consider the significant societal consequences of this expansion, particularly in discussing revenue allocations. It is essential that significant funding be dedicated toward addiction recovery and family supports.

While most people may never have an issue with problematic gambling behaviors, for the people who battle this addiction or those prone to an addiction, HF2000 could have life altering consequences for them and their families.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Leah Patton
Executive Director, Joint Religious Legislative Coalition