



April 23, 2025

Dear Senator:

Peace be with you.

We write with serious concern about today's procedural vote to move to a more favorable committee a new mobile sports gambling bill (S.F. 3414) introduced after deadlines that does not have a House companion. Essentially the same bill has already been defeated twice in the State and Local Government Committee, and no sports gambling bill has even gotten a hearing in the House this year. A vote to move this out of committee is a vote to waste further legislative resources on something that does not have enough support to pass. Please vote "no."

Bi-partisan opposition to mobile sports gambling has only been increasing. Minnesota has benefited from seeing the data that continues to emerge about harms generated since the U.S. Supreme Court allowed sports gambling to be legalized by states in 2018. For example, in the testimony that was submitted in State and Local Government before the bill was pulled from the schedule

- Three scholars highlighted a study that they had done of 2.3 million online gamblers over a five-year period, noting that fewer than five percent made a profit; of those who are successful bettors, the platforms can remove them or restrict their activity. They also stated that problem gambling disproportionately impacted low-income gamblers.
- The Public Health Advocacy Institute at Northeastern University School of Law wrote to share with legislators why they opposed the bill and how online sports gambling is an emerging and "fast-growing" public-health crisis.
- Les Bernal, director of Stop Predatory Gambling, described how illegal gambling *increases* after legalization, the exact opposite of what gambling profiteers state claim will happen, and that states that have legalized online gambling have experienced a metastasizing epidemic of gambling addiction among young adults.

Such testimony, many other studies, and recent media coverage on platforms such as John Oliver's Last Week Tonight, CBS Sunday Morning, and the Michael Lewis podcast "Against the Rules" (all airing in the past few weeks) are just some of the reasons why many are rethinking sports gambling.

Contrary to what is claimed, you are not required to rescue from offshore platforms the privileged few gamblers who can absorb losses and create what is essentially a state-sanctioned predatory system of consumer financial fraud. Protecting Minnesotans means not legalizing mobile sports betting at all.

Consider these facts: If this bill is expected to generate \$90 million annually in revenue for the gambling fund (not the general fund) at a 22 percent tax rate, that means collective *profits* are estimated at about \$409 million. As gambling proprietors regularly claim that margins on sports books are incredibly thin, how much *revenue* are they expecting to generate these profits? Billions.

Can Minnesota afford a massive wealth transfer of billions of dollars, compounded every year, to gambling proprietors who are imposing costs on the state in terms of the many documented harms of gambling addiction—while creating absolutely zero benefit to the state whatsoever?

Though the motives of some proponents may be good, this is an irresponsible piece of legislation to which we are strongly opposed. The late Pope Francis, in a speech on Sept. 20, 2024, lamented the rise of online sports gambling. He urged all people of goodwill to “expose the mental illness, despair, and suicides caused by the fact that there is a casino through the cell phone.” He stated, “[t]his is not a game; it’s an addiction,” and that taking money from people, especially from workers, the poor, and vulnerable “destroys entire families.”

There should be no rush to move this forward. As a state we can continue to watch the data emerge and see what is happening in other places before jumping into an industry that is generating book titles such as Johnathan Cohen’s new *Losing Big: America’s Reckless Bet on Sports Betting* (April 2025).

Thank you for your consideration. Please vote “no” on the motion to resurrect this bill.

Respectfully yours,



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