



pennsylvania

DEPARTMENT OF DRUG AND
ALCOHOL PROGRAMS

House Gaming Oversight Committee

Public Hearing – HB 1887

April 5, 2016

Testimony of

Gary Tennis, Secretary

PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs

Thank you Chairman Payne and Chairman Kotik for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 1887, sponsored by Rep. Ortitay.

The legislation references Title 4 of the PA Consolidated Statutes regarding the Compulsive and Problem Gambling Program within the Department of Health (DOH); however, as of several years ago, the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) has had the oversight of implementing a comprehensive, coordinated, and effective compulsive and problem gambling program for the Commonwealth. Currently a memorandum of understanding (MOU) is in place between the two departments and we would welcome an amendment to the bill to codify the MOU into statute.

Part of the mission of the compulsive and problem gambling program is to increase public awareness of and access to services available for problem and compulsive gamblers and their family members. One way to accomplish this mission is by maintaining a 24-hour toll-free gambling assistance hotline number. As you heard in prior hearings before this committee, there are several hotline numbers in operation within the Commonwealth. I understand and agree with Rep. Ortitay's legislative intent which is to promote consistency by maintaining just one toll-free gambling assistance hotline number; however, the bill does not require all agencies under the Governor's jurisdiction to utilize the same hotline number as established under the department.

Problem gambling is, and will continue to be, a compelling public health concern affecting Pennsylvanians of all ages, races and ethnic backgrounds in communities across the Commonwealth. The societal and economic costs can be significant, but they can be countered by targeted treatment and prevention aimed at minimizing harm to both the individual and society as a whole. In continuing to serve the Commonwealth, the Department will continue to work with the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board, the Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania, relevant stakeholders and others who are committed to helping those with a gambling problem.
