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## LATEST EXPANDED GAMBLING BILL HAS PROVISIONS TO ADDRESS PROBLEM GAMBLING

*Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling Responds to Release of Gambling Bill*

**BOSTON, MA** – The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling today commended the Massachusetts State Legislature for including key provisions to address the serious issue of problem gambling in its latest bill that would expand gambling in the Commonwealth.

“We would like to thank the Legislators for taking into account so many of the things that we’ve asked them to consider and for developing a bill that we feel is a big step in the right direction toward addressing concerns about problem gambling and ensuring services for people vulnerable to gambling problems,” said Council Executive Director Marlene Warner.

Throughout the consideration of expanded gambling in the Commonwealth, the Council has asked legislators and public officials to consider the downside of gambling and if they were still determined to bring casinos to the state, to please concentrate on minimizing the harms that would result as much as they were concentrating on maximizing the benefits.

The proposed legislation secures problem gambling services in a number of areas. Here are some highlights:

- **Exclusion list** -- This will allow families, as well as the person experiencing the gambling problem to propose exclusion, which would prevent problem gamblers from entering casinos.
- **Requires the posting of payback statistics of slot machines** played in gaming establishment. If posted prominently, this is a good education tool.
- **Onsite space for an independent compulsive gambling, substance abuse and mental health counseling service.** This will allow people to access information and help while maintaining the appropriate level of privacy so that problem gamblers won't have to worry about drawing great attention to them. The immediacy of this help is tremendous.
- **Research related to gambling and problem gambling's impact** on local area, promotes further research in the field, etc. This is a strong start to having solid and important data to inform services and policy.
- **Public Health Trust Fund** established to address problems related specifically to compulsive gambling.

Since the 1990's, there have been numerous bills proposing to expand gambling in the Commonwealth. The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling has been involved in the process – testifying at hearings, informing legislators about the devastation caused by problem gambling, and advocating for responsible public policy and services to protect people vulnerable to gambling problems.

*Founded in 1983, the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling is a private, non-profit health agency dedicated to providing leadership to reduce the social, financial, and emotional costs of problem gambling, and to promote a continuum of prevention and intervention strategies including: information and public awareness, community education and professional training, advocacy and referral services for problem gamblers, their loved ones and the greater community.*