

From: [AgencyWebsite \(GMB\)](#)
To: [Griffin, Tina \(GMB\)](#)
Subject: FW: Written Comment for 9/12/2024 WSGC
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From: Nanci Watson <nanci.watson@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 10, 2024 12:27 PM
To: AgencyWebsite (GMB) <agency.website@wsgc.wa.gov>
Subject: Written Comment for 9/12/2024 WSGC

External Email

I have prepared written comments related to problem gambling. Let me know if you need anything else to submit this on my behalf.

Gambling in the face of Suicide

Submitted as Public Comment to WSGC Sept, 2024, by Nanci Watson,
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In July, I was able to attend the National Conference on Gambling Addiction & Responsible Gambling, in San Diego.

There I attended a presentation from the Center for Gambling Studies, School for Social Work - Rutgers University, New Jersey.

It was called "Gambling as a Precipitating Factor in Deaths by Suicide in the National Violent Death Reporting System", M. van der Maas, R. DiMeglio, L. Nower.

Also attending and providing support were experts in Gambling Addiction from Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling, University of Maryland School of Medicine, in Baltimore.

For me this was, on the one hand a fantastic bit of culture shock, on the other, a sensation of having met someone who knew exactly what I was thinking.

I grew up on Fox Island, in the State of Washington, right down the beach from our one-time governor Dixie Lee Ray. When I attended an upper division zoology class from her at the UW, she was accompanied on the stage by her poodle and her wolfhound. She would have loved this presentation with its big ideas and bracing detail.

In my family, among the step kids, I have been impacted by suicide since my retirement. The first the death of young teenager, previously removed from the care of her mother, and observing that mother, then homeless, sleeping all day while spending most nights at the casino; This caused me to volunteer on the Problem Gambling Taskforce, as a member of the public impacted by problem gambling,

During my time on the taskforce, I was shocked by how sluggish our analysis of the problem appeared to be.

We were repeatedly reminded that "most people can gamble without any harm" and while wrapping up our recommendations, we were told that there "just wasn't time to look at the impact of specific types of gambling."

When recommendations were made to the State Legislature, to continue with the existing membership as an advisory council, the first step taken in the House, where Rep Chris Stearn (Vice Chair, State Government & Tribal Relations and Regulated Substances & Gaming) volunteered as the sponsor, for HB 1681, was to eliminate a member of the public altogether. Then after a first reading another change was made, that being to eliminate any member from

the commercial card rooms, which compete with casinos, and creating a substitute version of the bill. During public comment, a representative from the State Gambling Commission made it known that the staff had not received a chance to review this last change before submitting and as a result the proposed wording was not consistent with the existing legislation. That problem was then ironed out as the bill proceeded and was passed as a second substitute. In the new year the Problem Gambling Advisory Council, as restructured, held its first meeting without utilizing open meeting guidelines, having been advised by legislative staff that no further Public Comment would be required.

Meanwhile the team from Rutgers University, two hours by car, north of Atlantic City, the "Fix Was In" with these findings were being validated and published not long after the presentation:

1. "In the State of Nevada suicide deaths associated with gambling are 9x higher than average." [Other noteworthy states were:] Delaware (1.10%), Washington (1.03%), and Oklahoma (1.00%).
2. "Financial harms seem to be most salient in the relationship between gambling and death by suicide. As a result we need to seriously consider that monitoring and addressing the impact of financial harms may be an effective strategy for reducing gambling-related suicide.
3. "Gambling on electronic gambling machines in gambling halls or bars was associated with increased odds of suicidal events. Other types of gambling ... were not associated independently with suicidal events. This result shows that the type of gambling needs to be considered as a relevant factor in gambling research."
4. "Evidence supports the fact that most harms from gambling are found among the proportion of the population that does not experience clinical levels of Gambling Disorder." [This is known as the Prevalence Paradox.]
5. "In 2003, an analysis of the major methodological issues facing researchers trying to measure the social costs of gambling noted that one of the greatest problems was a lack of systematically collected data. More than 20 years later, this problem persists in the US, resulting in a lack of available data that are useful in estimating the social costs of gambling. The results of [the] content analysis suggest that the NVDRS procedure could be improved with greater consideration of gambling as a contextual factor relevant to a death by suicide."

If anyone is interested to learn more, the lead author is shown below.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S003335062400283X>

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