

March 31, 2011

Governor Chafee,

The folks from CCACG invited me to come with them today and I would have liked to. Unfortunately, there was not enough advance notice for me to attend. At 11:00 am when your meeting begins, I'll be meeting with a patient. She's been a state employee for almost 30 years. She's a slot addict and she has lost everything. She hasn't gambled in the 6 months I've been working with her, but she still doesn't know whether she'll lose her home. After that, I'll meet with other men and women, in similar circumstances, for the rest of the day. Conservatively speaking, the 6 men and women I'm scheduled to see today have lost in excess of \$750,000 gambling in Rhode Island. They are typical, not exceptions.

National and international prevalence rates indicate that there are probably a minimum of 7,500 adult gambling addicts in RI, and a maximum estimate of 22,500. These are people who are currently acute. These are not lifetime numbers, which would by definition be much greater. The best research in the world consistently indicates that 50% of net gambling revenues comes from addicts.

The Rhode Island Hospital Gambling Treatment Program has lost 50% of its funding (from a legislative grant, administered by MHRH --- an executive agency, I believe) since FY 2007-08. During the same period, net VLT revenues in RI rose \$51 million per year, an increase of 8.9%. Out of approximately \$285 million in the state's share of VLT revenue in 2010, the state of Rhode Island spent \$74,812 to help gambling addicts. That's a ratio of .000263 cents for every dollar, remembering 50 cents of each dollar came from an addict.

The expansion to table games will conservatively create 1000 to 2250 new addicts of these games. I base this estimate on the rates we have observed over the last ten years in the Rhode Island Gambling Treatment Program. I would hope that you consider this before enacting any new expansion of gambling.

Bob Breen, Ph.D.
Director