



March 19, 2021

Governor Kate Brown  
Senate President Peter Courtney  
Speaker Tina Kotek  
Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod  
House Republican Leader Christine Drazan

Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Governor and Legislative Leadership,

We are writing with concern about the current and potential trajectory of gambling in the State of Oregon. Regulatory frameworks have not kept pace with the rapidly growing influence of technology in the gambling industry, which poses a serious threat to the balance of gambling in our state.

The last time Oregon conducted a comprehensive review of gambling was 1996. Our technology infrastructure was vastly different 25 years ago than it is today. DVDs had just been introduced. Cell phones were just entering the mainstream with the release of a “clamshell” phone.

The 1996 review and subsequent report was a result of a Governor’s Task Force on Gaming, which was charged with studying, not promoting or opposing, gambling in Oregon. The purpose was to understand the landscape of gambling in each sector of the state, the social and economic impacts, and to provide a resource for policy makers to inform deliberate decision making.

As the report states, “We need gambling policy that makes sense for all Oregonians, not just dollars for one segment of the market; policy that looks long-term, not expedient solutions in the face of financial difficulty.”

This statement should continue to guide gambling policies for the state. These are complex policies with social and economic impacts that require significant study and a public process; however, market competition, a fragmented regulatory infrastructure and increased technological advances in gambling have allowed our state's focus to drift and potential risks to be overlooked.

Research shows that technological aspects of gambling most negatively impacts marginalized communities, which are the same communities we are seeing disproportionately impacted by the affects of COVID-19. Additionally, the pandemic has made it much more difficult to engage in an adequate public discussion, and further exposed how policy decisions are being made in a segmented way, not comprehensively or strategically with all voices at the table.

We believe that it is time to take another look 25 years later at gambling in Oregon. Our goal for this study is not to prescribe outcomes, but to ensure all current and potential impacts of gambling are evaluated, considered and understood so decisions are deliberate and driven by the long-term interests of the state, tribes and people of Oregon.

We are ready to do our part and contribute to this effort.

Sincerely,

Julie Hynes, Executive Director  
Oregon Council on Problem Gaming

Wes Woods, Executive Director  
Voices of Problem Gambling Recovery

Jason Brandt, Executive Director  
Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association

N. Kathryn Brigham, Chair, Board of Trustees  
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

Dan Courtney, Chair, Tribal Board of Directors  
Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians

Cheryle A. Kennedy, Chairwoman, Tribal Council  
Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde

Debbie Bossley, Chair, Tribal Council  
Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua & Siuslaw Indians