



***New York State Gaming Commission Problem Gambling Forum***  
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**Testimony  
by**

**James Maney, Executive Director**

**New York Council on Problem Gambling  
100 Great Oaks Boulevard  
Suite 126  
Albany, NY 12203  
518-867-4084  
[jmaney@nyproblemgambling.org](mailto:jmaney@nyproblemgambling.org)  
[www.nyproblemgambling.org](http://www.nyproblemgambling.org)**

First I want to take this opportunity to thank the Gaming Commission and Chairman Gearan for hosting this forum and to acknowledge Acting Executive Director Williams and NYS OASAS Commissioner Gonzalez-Sanchez for their leadership in addressing problem gambling with casino gambling expansion on the horizon in New York State. This event truly marks a historic shift in the focus of this issue from an individual and family problem to a PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE. We are pleased to be part of this discussion and offer our support and expertise to the Commission throughout the selection process, as well as through our continued work with the Responsible Play Partnership.

What I want to impart in my testimony today is how exciting it is that this issue is not only being addressed but that we ALL are communicating, exciting that there are now two powerful state agencies prioritizing this issue, exciting that for the first time problem gambling is being taken this seriously AND is thrilling to see that as a state we are being proactive in developing best practices and programs intended to keep casino patrons safe NOW- before individuals, communities and New York State are faced with the consequences.

The New York Council on Problem Gambling has been strategizing how best to address problem gambling and its associated consequences for individuals, families and communities since 1996. Throughout the years there have been several changes in funding levels, programs and treatment available, etc. but the most powerful change has been the formation of the Responsible Play Partnership. Powerful because we are pooling our knowledge, our resources and utilizing our varied relationships to get things DONE.

We need to continue to develop these partnerships, PARTNERSHIPS that focus on ongoing communication about problem gambling and how it is impacting casino communities and all of New York State. We can develop the best plans in the world right now AND implement them, but the truth is that right now we don't know. We don't know what the fallout will look like in each area or how the

needs of NY residents in these areas will ebb and flow over time. As industry leaders, state regulators, service providers and advocates we need to continually revisit this issue to ensure that the safety of NYers is being adequately addressed AND to hold us all accountable for making it our passion to do so.

It is our belief that a continued focus on building partnerships to address problem gambling in NYS will yield the best results for problem gamblers, their families, communities and New York State. To that end we recommend three things:

1. We need a comprehensive STATEWIDE plan to address problem gambling in New York. The comprehensive plan should address developing plans to address problem gambling policy, research, education, prevention, treatment, and recovery.
2. Next we call for the development of a Statewide Problem Gambling Steering Committee. Casino operators as well as ALL existing gaming facilities, state government, community members, academia and researchers, Gamblers Anonymous and Gam-Anon and problem gambling service providers in NYS identify an Executive level staff member to serve as a representative on a Statewide Problem Gambling Steering Committee.
3. Finally we need to conduct a problem gambling social impact study to measure the effect of gambling on communities and all of New York State. An impact study would measure the prevalence of problem gambling as well as the consequences and costs and would inform the development of policy and allocation of resources.

Communities have spoken and they ARE concerned about this issue. Let's be able to tell them we have a plan to address their concerns. Thank you for your time and attention, I look forward to our work together and am now happy to take any questions or comments.