

MASSACHUSETTS CATHOLIC BISHOPS' STATEMENT ON EXPANDED GAMBLING LEGISLATION

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Today, the issue of expanded gambling within the Commonwealth has once again come to the forefront of the public arena. We, the four bishops of the four dioceses in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, again feel compelled to oppose the expansion of gambling in Massachusetts.

We understand that these are difficult times for many families within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The unemployment rate remains high, currently at 7.4% percent, thousands of families continue to rely upon state assistance to survive, and more and more people are facing the harsh realities of poverty. Naturally, the state is searching for new ways to increase revenue and create jobs aimed at meeting these difficult challenges and to bring about economic stimuli. However, expanded gambling in the form of slot parlors and casinos is an illusory solution to this complicated problem. If anything, expanded, predatory gambling will only add to the need for state assistance in the Commonwealth.

While the Catholic Church views gambling as a legitimate form of entertainment when done in moderation, the gaming legislation opens the door to a new form of predatory gaming which threatens the moral fabric of our society. We are concerned that the Commonwealth's reliance on gambling revenue continues to escalate. This reliance upon an unstable form of revenue, which has been shrinking in other states, would depend upon those who are addicted to gambling, many of whom are already among the ranks of the poorest in the community.

Many of our churches, schools, and other non-profit organizations rely upon bingo and other games-of-chance for relatively small amounts of revenue. We hope the citizens of the Commonwealth will recognize the difference between a local fund-raiser managed by volunteers and a multi-billion dollar industry that exploits vulnerable members of the community for financial gain.

The gambling industry can threaten local business and change the entire make-up of communities. If Massachusetts were to pass the proposed gambling legislation and open the door for casinos and slot parlors in our state, it could diminish our rich heritage and history as a Commonwealth. There is too much at stake for Massachusetts to open the door to expanded gambling.

We urge the Massachusetts State Senate not to follow the lead of their colleagues in the House of Representatives, but vote against the expansion of predatory gambling.

Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley

Archbishop

Archdiocese of Boston

Most Rev. George W. Coleman

Bishop

Diocese of Fall River

Most Rev. Timothy A. McDonnell

Bishop

Diocese of Springfield

Most Rev. Robert J. McManus

Bishop

Diocese of Worcester