

**To:** Oregon Lottery Commission and Director Barry Pack

**From:** Kitty Martz, CGRM, CGAC II, MBA

**Date:** April 24, 2020

**Re: Responsible Gambling efforts amidst COVID 19 Video Lottery Terminal venue closures**

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Thank you for acting swiftly and wisely in shutting down Video Lottery Terminals at the onset of the COVID 19 cautionary measures. I have the upmost respect for how Director Pack and your team handled that period of time. I do sincerely hope you are all well.

This last month has, tragically, helped make a point. Experts and advocates like myself have been consistently trying to shine a light on the fact **that publicly operated gambling is an unstable, unsustainable form of revenue**. Maybe voters and legislators will take notice now?

What I fear, however, is that the focus will turn to charging the lottery with recouping the shortfall of approximately \$20 million dollar per week during the closures. It is going to put you in a terribly difficult place. **Please let us know how we can be of assistance in backing you up on the following facts and/or bringing about the suggested action items:**

- **Publicly operated gambling is a regressive tax on our vulnerable residents.** Now these individuals are particularly struggling with co-occurring disorders and mental health challenges, which are exacerbated by the current state of financial insecurity. They are our honored citizens and they need our protection and help right now, not targeted.
- As was realized in the 2009 recession, creating an infrastructure of gambling treatment providers that is dismantled at the first signs of fiscal difficulties is nonsensical. A threshold number was legally established out of the 2011 budget that treatment and prevention funding must not fall below. **Please let our specially trained workforce be available to treat people who are suffering when they need it most.**
- In the same respect, **this is the time to do research** and gather extremely unique data that is unprecedented. We know that your team believes in good science. Advocates and experts want to partner with you in gathering and utilizing it for the public good. Please don't miss this opportunity. One example: requests for treatment referrals from the 877-My-Limit hotline have quite nearly stopped entirely. We need to look at what that says about the correlation between VLT's and addiction. How is that data being captured and interpreted? Is there still a belief that illegal / online cryptocurrency gambling sites are capturing a significant percentage of your gambling market share?

- Clearly a percentage of VLT revenues, once the machines are on again, will be bankrolled by stimulus checks. That money is intended to be infused into our local economy better than that, especially **allowing small businesses to get back on their feet**. One national advocacy group is calling for a 30-day moratorium on the ability to gamble after stimulus checks are distributed. It's certainly extreme, though perhaps worth looking at the math.
- **Your marketing efforts should specifically address individuals with gambling disorders who have not been able to play VLT's for an extended period of time. There should be commercials that applaud the people who have now achieved a few months of gambling abstinence and encourage them to seek out professional support to keep up their amazing progress in recovery.**
- You've always said that you want "a lot of people to play a little". This is the time to back that ideal up with a **marketing platform that seeks to protect vulnerable players and truly appeals to a wide-reaching audience**. I would be honored to offer my own feedback and opinions of the folks in gambling recovery who I work with about your campaigns and the impact they have on us.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this letter into your meeting record. Be well.