



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### WCC URGES LEGISLATORS TO OPPOSE ONLINE SPORTS GAMBLING

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Wisconsin, sent a [memo](#) to all lawmakers urging them to oppose SB 592 and AB 601, which begins the process of legalizing online sports gambling in the state.

In the memo, WCC Executive Director Barbara Sella noted that “The Church does not object to games of chance or wagers in themselves. However, gambling is unjust when it surpasses entertainment and becomes a source of enslavement, depriving people of what they need. Online sports gambling harms individuals and families, especially those that can least afford it.”

The memo continued by explaining the addictive nature of online sports gambling. Sella explained “Instant access to wagering on a phone or mobile device—an impulse that can be immediately fulfilled at any time, in any place—has shown itself to be conducive to addiction. Online bets put a sportsbook in every bar, bedroom, and boardroom across the state. This type of addictive gambling is distinct from that which happens in-person at a casino or even as part of a low-stakes fundraiser or game with friends.”

Furthermore, Sella highlighted how online sports gambling would hurt families. She cited multiple studies showing that:

- Households involved in online sports gambling saw their net investments fall by nearly 14%.
- Households using sports gambling apps lost an average of \$1,100 per year.
- Online sports betting led to decreased credit availability, increased credit card debt, and a higher incidence of overdrawing. Effects were particularly acute among households that were least able to afford it, pushing them deeper into debt.
- Fewer than 5% of online sports gamblers turned a profit over time.

Online sports gambling leads to higher rates of bankruptcy, decrease in net investments and financial health, as well as increased rates of mental health crises and suicide.

Sella continued, “The legislation does not include important consumer protections, such as advertising restrictions, maximum spending amounts, or additional support for gambling addiction treatment and prevention.”

Sella concluded that, “The negative societal impacts to individuals, families, communities, and the common good will not be offset by more dollars in state coffers.”

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