



March 6, 2017

Speaker Paul D. Ryan
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Minority Leader Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Leader McConnell, Leader Pelosi and Leader Schumer,

As Congress and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services consider the repeal and replacement of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), we urge you to recognize gambling disorders as a public health issue that merits inclusion in any replacement for the healthcare law.

Today, gambling disorders are recognized under the ACA's essential health benefits, in the categories of "mental health and substance use disorders" and "behavioral health treatment." This is aligned with the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM – 5), which recognizes "gambling disorder" as a diagnosable condition.

We believe this recognition, which did not exist prior to the passage of ACA, is critical not only to enable adequate funding for research, but also to ensure necessary resources and treatment facilities are available for those struggling with problem gambling disorders.

We would be concerned with any paring back of essential health benefits that eliminates "gambling disorders." Inclusion of behavioral health is critical to ensuring integrated and comprehensive healthcare in the United States, and this approach has increased access to treatment for gambling disorders.¹

The casino gaming industry takes extraordinary measures to ensure customers enjoy the entertainment experience we provide in a responsible manner. Casino operators and gaming machine manufacturers abide by a robust code of conduct that outlines measures the industry must take to prevent and address responsible gaming, including extensive employee training. Additionally, the industry makes significant investments in peer-reviewed

¹ National Council on Problem Gambling, *Problem Gambling in the 21st Century Healthcare System* (July 2014), <http://www.ncpgambling.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/ACA-brief-web-layout-publication.pdf>.

research focused on effective treatment and prevention methods through the [National Center for Responsible Gaming](#).

Even as dozens of new casinos have opened nationwide over the last 20 years, the prevalence rate of problem gambling— about one percent— has not increased. While research shows that the majority of patrons set a budget of under \$200 when they visit a casino, those who struggle with a gambling disorder deserve access to treatment.

For these reasons, we urge you to ensure that any ACA replacement policy continues to recognize gambling disorders as a public health issue and is included as an essential benefit. We welcome the opportunity to further discuss this important issue with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "G. Freeman".

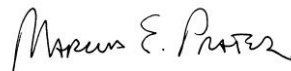
Geoff Freeman
CEO and President
American Gaming Association

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ernie Stevens Jr.".

Ernie Stevens
Chairman
National Indian Gaming Association

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Keith S. Whyte".

Keith S. Whyte
Executive Director
National Council on Problem Gambling

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Marcus E. Prater".

Marcus Prater
Executive Director
Association of Gaming Equipment
Manufacturers (AGEM)

CC: U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price