



Public Health and Consumer Protection Considerations

Chair Fields, Chair Hall, and Members of the House Labor & Economic Development Committee,

My name is Daniel Umfleet, and I am the Founder and CEO of Kindbridge Behavioral Health, a specialized behavioral health provider supporting individuals and families impacted by gambling-related harm and related mental health challenges. Thank you for the opportunity to provide a clinical perspective as Alaska evaluates potential changes to sports betting policy.

Kindbridge does not take a position on the legalization, expansion, restriction, or modification of gambling markets. Our role is focused on clinical standards, public health safeguards, and ensuring individuals have access to qualified support services when gambling-related harm occurs.

Alaska's largely rural geography presents unique healthcare access challenges. Ensuring that individuals in remote and rural communities have access to screening resources, referral pathways, and qualified behavioral health support remains an important public health priority. In states with significant rural populations, visible and accessible pathways to care — including telehealth-based services — have been critical in reducing geographic barriers and improving engagement with care.

From a clinical standpoint, gambling disorder rarely exists in isolation. Many individuals who seek treatment for gambling-related harm have prior mental health diagnoses that did not previously address gambling behaviors, often due to limited awareness of gambling disorder within traditional healthcare systems. Others present with gambling as their primary concern but are found to have co-occurring conditions such as anxiety, depression, substance use disorders, or significant financial distress. This underscores the importance of integrating gambling-related screening and referral pathways into broader behavioral health infrastructure.

Regardless of specific legislative outcomes, residents benefit when clear, accessible pathways to evidence-based resources are in place. Gambling-related harm often develops gradually and may remain hidden until consequences become severe. Structured consumer protection measures — such as self-exclusion systems, responsible gaming protocols, and defined referral mechanisms to independent clinical resources — can increase visibility of available support and reduce barriers to seeking help. When such infrastructure is present, information about available support becomes more visible within the broader system, which can help reduce friction for individuals who are already experiencing harm.

In some states, programming aligned with structured referral systems has expanded access to care for vulnerable populations, including military veterans and their families, reducing financial and geographic barriers to treatment. While each state's approach differs, sustained attention to consumer protection infrastructure strengthens overall public health capacity.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of these issues.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'D. Umfleet', is positioned above the printed name.

Daniel Umfleet
Founder & CEO
Kindbridge Behavioral Health