



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS
The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Florida

201 West Park Avenue, Tallahassee, Florida 32301-7715 * (850) 222-3803 * www.flaccb.org

**Statement on Proposed Gambling Expansion
Special Session of the Florida Legislature
May 17, 2021**

At various points since 1978, and most recently in 2018, the bishops of Florida have publicly outlined concerns about expansions of casino gambling. There is historical and anecdotal evidence that casino gambling is accompanied by vice and social evils.

Games of chance or betting are not in themselves unjust. They become morally unacceptable, however, when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for him or herself and the needs of others (*cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2413). Regrettably, those least able to spare income for gambling spend proportionally more on it, putting their own stability, and that of their family, at risk.

The impact of casino gambling on low- and moderate-income families and individuals, especially those for whom gambling becomes a compulsive behavior, can be dire. Disadvantaged individuals are particularly vulnerable to the lure of the casino and the promise of great fortune. For those struggling to make ends meet, casino gambling can provide an attractive means to relieve financial burdens, which often only leads to crushing debt and personal crisis.

New technologies that facilitate gambling – particularly through internet and smart phone – are seemingly developed to maximize participation, arguably seeking to promote addiction. This is the nature of internet-based sports gambling. This component of proposed legislation to expand gambling in Florida has particularly serious effects, most notably among young men.

While many churches, schools, and other non-profit organizations rely upon games of chance for relatively small amounts of revenue, most people recognize the difference between local fundraisers managed by volunteers and a multi-billion-dollar industry that exploits vulnerable members of the community for financial gain.

The anticipated increase in state revenue is likely attractive to many legislators. However, we expect higher overall social costs in the coming decades if expansion of gambling is enacted. We urge the legislature to put a pause on the proposed expansion of casino and internet-based gambling.