



EXHIBIT 3
DATE 1-28-05
HB HB 358

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Madam Chair and Members of House Committee on Human Services

RE: HB358 – Certification of Problem Gambling Counselors

The Montana Psychological Association wishes to speak against HB 358 – the certification of problem gambling counselors.

1. It is problematic to set up gambling as a separate disorder as the rate of co-morbidity or co-occurring disorders is very high.

There is no logical argument for singling out any diagnostic category, in this case "pathological gambling/problem gambling" for specialized treatment and, in fact, doing so poses potential risks. A high percentage of those labeled as having a pathological gambling problem also experience other psychological problems that occur concurrently with, antecedent to, or resulting from the identified problem. There are multiple etiologies for these identified social problems, requiring evaluation by professionals qualified to assess the whole range of psychiatric disorders.

2. Potential for making the treatment for those with "problem gambling" issues less available.

While the proposed certification seems to indicate that it does not intend to limit or preclude other health care providers, in practice that is precisely what may happen. In our rural state, it would be risky to eliminate licensed mental health providers from providing treatment or therapy for problem gamblers. Limiting specific areas of mental health practice to only those belonging to a certified group would limit the freedom of choice of Montana consumers of these services.

3. There is no evidence that gambling treatments are special or different from the techniques that are provided in masters and doctorate curriculum.

The training hours for certification as a problem gambling counselor as specified in this bill are minimal and would certainly not provide the level of diagnostic proficiency nor require internship or supervision, which other mental health professionals listed in 53-21-102 have achieved. Additionally, it is unreasonable to require that Psychologists receive an additional 60 hours of training in order to treat "problem gamblers". (Page 2, Line 3-4)

Thank you.

Montana Psychological Association

