

Wisconsin Family Action, Citizens Against Expanded Gambling: Governor Evers approves online sports betting at expense of Wisconsin citizens, particularly teens

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MADISON – Earlier this week, Governor Evers celebrated the launch of the first-ever online gambling/sports betting operation in Wisconsin at a ribbon-cutting ceremony held at the Oneida Casino in Green Bay. Governor Evers amended the Oneida compact to allow online sports gambling in the Oneida Casinos earlier this year. Per Wisconsin law, the governor has unilateral ability to amend the gambling compacts with the Native American tribes.

Studies in the U.K., where sports betting has been legal for some time, have shown an explosive increase in teen gambling addiction. One study found more than 50% of 16-year olds had sports gambling apps on their phones before such betting was even legal there. “We know gambling operators target ads to the mostly likely segments of our population to wager; that audience is young males in their teens through early 30s,” said Julaine Appling, President of Wisconsin Family Action. “This is a vulnerable group whose cognitive ability to associate behavior with consequence is not fully developed which is exactly why they are so heavily targeted.”

The state of Michigan has set records in online gambling and sports wagering revenue just 10 months after going live. In that same time frame, the gambling

addiction hotline saw a 33% increase in calls (over 2,000 more calls) in just one year. Analysts and recovery advocates have raised concerns about the lack of education and awareness campaigns directed at gambling addiction similar to ones that focus on drug and alcohol addictions.

It is expected that the remaining 10 tribes will line up to amend their compacts to allow for online sports betting, creating the largest expansion of gambling in Wisconsin history.

“Gambling is a zero sum game. It creates no new wealth, and little to no economic multipliers in the local economy. It’s a short-sighted revenue stream for government as eventually people play to extinction. The biggest winners will be the casinos and the government, all at the expense of Wisconsin citizens,” said Lorri Pickens, Executive Director of Citizens Against Expanded Gambling.

Wisconsin deserves better from its leaders. Governor Evers should always put Wisconsin citizens first.