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PA Gaming Control Board Recognized March as Problem Gambling Awareness Month

HARRISBURG -- The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board (PGCB) recognized March as Problem Gambling Awareness Month in order to promote resources intended to help individuals with a gambling problem.

On Monday, March 1, 2021, representatives of the PGCB's Office of Compulsive and Problem Gambling will participate in a virtual kickoff of Problem Gambling Awareness Month. Throughout March, the PGCB will be joining the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, the Pennsylvania Lottery, the Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania and other organizations to educate Pennsylvanians about the effects of gambling disorders, provide tools necessary to identify this addiction and to recognize access to services that help minimize the consequences of disordered gambling.

Elizabeth Lanza, Director of the PGCB's Office of Compulsive and Problem Gambling, stressed that, under normal circumstances, problem gambling is a known issue that can affect Pennsylvanians. It is even more vital this year to call attention to these issues and ensure the citizens of Pennsylvania know that help is available.

"The goal of Problem Gambling Awareness Month is to spotlight the issues and educate the general public about the warning signs of problem gambling, as well as raise awareness about treatment and other programs that are available both locally and nationally," Lanza says.

Kevin O'Toole, PGCB Executive Director, says the Board and the PA gaming industry recognizes the importance of gambling addiction programs to help individuals and hopes that during the month of March we can provide education, outreach and prevention options to anyone that may be affected by a gambling disorder.

The Board's Office of Compulsive and Problem Gambling works with both state and national problem gambling organizations, and with gaming license holders in Pennsylvania, to ensure its ability to provide useful methods and resources to deal with issues surrounding gambling addiction are available.

O'Toole adds that the PGCB has worked on expanding and enhancing tools for problem gambling as additional forms of gaming have been added throughout the Commonwealth and online. These tools are in addition to the successful casino Self-Exclusion program, which has been expanded to allow individuals to ban themselves from iGaming, Fantasy Contests, and Video Gaming Terminals (VGTs). Pennsylvania's Self-Exclusion Program has aided thousands of persons by agreeing to stay out of Pennsylvania casinos or face penalties. To date, over 16,000 persons have signed up and taken advantage of this program to self-ban from casinos for 1-year, 5-years or a lifetime.

In addition to the Self-Exclusion program, O'Toole notes some additional problem gambling tools the PGCB has recently made available:

- www.ResponsiblePlay.pa.gov, a new website dedicated to problem gambling, which provides information and links to assist persons in identifying a potential gambling problem and finding help;

- The first U.S. gaming jurisdiction to adopt the PlayPause program, which allows for individuals to ban themselves from online iGaming sites in all jurisdictions that also participate in the program; and,
- Options for participants to limit their online play or spend in fantasy contests, online casino games, online poker, and/or online sports wagering.

As Pennsylvania's gambling industry continues to grow, it is important for the PGCB to continue to raise awareness, through events such as Problem Gambling Awareness Month, Lanza says. "It is important for the PGCB to raise awareness on the effects of gambling addiction and showcase what resources are available to help the citizens of Pennsylvania. The public needs to know that problem gambling tools are out there, and that gambling addiction treatment is not only available but has proven to be effective."

About the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board

The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board is tasked to oversee all aspects of gambling at 14 land-based casinos, online casino games, retail and online sports wagering, and Video Gaming Terminals (VGTs) at qualified truck stops, along with the regulation of online fantasy sports contests.

The land-based casino industry in Pennsylvania consists of six racetrack (Category 1) casinos, five stand-alone (Category 2) casinos, two resort (Category 3) casinos and one mini-casino (Category 4). Casino expansion will continue over the next couple of years with the anticipated openings of up to four additional Category 4 casinos. A significant job generator in the Commonwealth, casinos and the other types of Board-regulated gaming annually generate over \$1.5 billion in tax revenue.

Additional information about both the PGCB's gaming regulatory efforts and Pennsylvania's gaming industry can be found at <https://gamingcontrolboard.pa.gov/>. You can also follow the agency on Twitter by choosing @PAGamingControl.

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