

# Mass. Legislature slashing problem gambling services funding by 17 percent causes concern among advocates

Updated on July 11, 2017

By [State House News Service](#)

By **Katie Lannan, State House News Service**

With casinos on the horizon and online gambling gaining more attention, the Legislature has proposed reducing funding for problem gambling services by 17 percent, according to the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling, which is urging Gov. Charlie Baker and the Legislature to restore appropriations.

The \$40.2 billion fiscal 2018 budget that's on Baker's desk includes \$1.25 million for the Department of Public Health to spend on problem gambling services, \$250,000 less than what was appropriated last year.

"These cuts to problem gambling services couldn't come at a worse time, particularly as online gambling is expanding, we anticipate new casinos opening in the coming year, and the Lottery had another record year," Marlene Warner, the council's executive director, said in a statement Monday. "The funding cuts will be devastating to our work treating those suffering from addiction and preventing problem gambling in the first place."

Massachusetts lawmakers spent a Friday afternoon in July rushing a state budget to Gov. Charlie Baker's desk.

The problem gambling services account, which the council said is funded through unclaimed lottery winnings, was targeted for savings last December, when Baker made a series of unilateral spending cuts.

The \$500,000 cut led the council to lay off staff, cancel prevention programs and limit the availability of the state's only problem-gambling helpline, Warner told the News Service in March. Citing insufficient revenues, the Legislature on Friday agreed to a budget that canceled many of the investments planned earlier in the year.

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