

Casino social impacts not so negative – Boston Herald

Written by Administrator
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A new study by the University of Massachusetts Amherst found that social and economic impacts of casino gambling is not as bad as what people think it would be.

“At the state level, there is no compelling evidence that negative impacts related to problem gambling have increased as a result of casino introduction,” said lead researcher Rachel Volberg.

Bankruptcy, divorce, restraining orders and cases of child welfare are “related indicators to problem gambling,” she said.

Volberg and her team conducted the study surrounding the introduction of Plainridge Park Casino, which opened in 2015, on the socioeconomic impacts the casino would bring to surrounding neighborhoods. Researchers found that there is “no evidence that the introduction of casino gambling has had any impact on crime rates” on the statewide level.

Locally, however, the UMass Amherst researchers note there has been an increase in credit card fraud, lost property, reports of suspicious activity, and traffic complaints in the town of Plainville that “can likely be attributed” to the casino.

“There has been a significant change in both statewide and regional attitudes towards gambling that likely reflects greater satisfaction with the current gambling landscape,” researchers found.

Rod Motamedi, a researcher, said that the \$66.4 million in tax money from the Plainville casino in 2017 is distributed using the same formula for lottery revenues: a city or town’s population, income and property values.

“The economic and fiscal impacts have been positive at the regional level,” Volberg said of Plainridge Park, citing the construction of new casinos and the employment of a large local workforce.

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Gayle Cameron, interim chairwoman of the Massachusetts Gaming Commission, praised the researchers for providing new information that is more than just “anecdotal stories about what the impact would be.”

“When we open these casinos and started this process, there were so many anecdotal stories about the impact would be,” said Cameron. “So to have real-time information, I always think is very positive. Part of our mission is to really minimize the negative impacts here with gaming.”

MGM Springfield opened in its doors last summer and Encore Boston Harbor is expected to open June 2019. Both casinos will be part of the university’s future gambling studies.

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