

January 23, 2024

The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I write in support of HB145--Criminal Law - Revenge Porn - Visual Representation.

In the summer of 2023, much to my Horror, Humiliation, & Heartbreak, it was brought to my attention that there were images of me online, on a popular and widely-viewed fetish website. A former friend of mine, Oliver Bateman, had created a page for me on this semi-public website, where he shared hundreds of images and videos of me. Only here's the thing – it was my face, but the images of my body – were not real. I never posed for such images. Oliver had mastered the AI software which he had access to through his workplace. He used this software to take real images of me – lifted from my facebook and instagram pages – and while he kept my real face in the image, he extensively edited my body and my clothing in the images, to make me appear nude, and/or dressed provocatively, and engaging in sexual acts. He also used the Deep Fake technology to make it appear that I was engaged in pornographic acts, in images and videos. Now I want to be clear. He was using images of my face from real photos I had posed for – but he had edited these images extensively to make them appear pornographic, and engaging in all manner of sex acts. And he was sharing them on a website using my real location, and using a name very similar to my own name. His virtual representation of me put my real self in real danger. He impersonated my manner of speaking in the captions he wrote – such that onlookers might think it was the real me. (We were acquainted for 15 years - he knew my manner of speaking well.) This page he created had 10,000 subscribers, and was online for three years. These false and defamatory images and videos he created of me had hundreds of thousands of views. It could have been viewed by anyone who created an account for this publicly available website. It's very possible that these images could have

been viewed by coworkers at the hospital where I work, by a potential job interviewer for a new job, by members of my actual or prospective community, or by anyone. They present me in a light in which I would never present myself. These images looked incredibly real and convincing - but they were not me.

When this website was brought to my attention, I was devastated. I had absolutely no control over these false and defamatory images, and the fact that they had already been viewed thousands of times. To say I felt depressed is an understatement. It felt like these images were a violation against my very spirit. And they certainly ought to be a criminal violation, as well!

And the technology has only gotten better since then. Oliver, a pervert with computer skills and way too much time on his hands - could devote untold hours to creating these images of me. But as the AI technology progresses, someone could probably create images like these within minutes, if they simply purchase the right app.

I took a stand against Oliver. I sought out a restraining order, and I filed criminal charges. However I was told by the courts, that the depraved acts he committed, over a period of three years -- though clearly criminal in nature -- did not actually break any existing laws, because the laws had not yet caught up to the technology.

Revenge porn is a terrible crime, regardless of the circumstances. But with the rise of AI, revenge porn can be created for people who have never even engaged in any form of porn, whatsoever!

We've all witnessed the rise of AI over the last few years.

Today I ask you to criminalize bad actors such as Oliver, and update these laws to reflect modern technology.

I urge a favorable report on HB145.

Sincerely,
Abigail Schaffer