



HB 1294

OUR MISSION

To restore, protect, and advance the rights of women and girls through legal argument, policy advocacy, and public education

OUR VISION

Total liberation of women and girls from all forms of sex-based oppressions, including gender identity, male violence, commercial sexual exploitation, and reproductive coercion

SUPPORT

Women's Liberation Front SUPPORTS HB 1294 which renames "child pornography" as "child sex abuse material" and expands state law to cover computer generated depictions of children through artificial intelligence (AI) under pre-existing law relating the possession and access of child sex abuse material.

Women's Liberation Front is a national nonpartisan 501(c)(3) nonprofit that works to restore, defend, and advance the rights of women and girls. Today, pornography is an omnipresence^{1,2} that is extremely harmful to girls and women as a sexual conditioning tool that eroticizes and normalizes violence against women and children. Decades of minimizing the harms of pornography, dismissing it's prevalence, and debating or ignoring the precedent of *Miller v. California* that set limitations on "obscenity" as not protected speech under First Amendment rights³ has brought us to a place where policymakers are only just now reckoning with how widespread harmful content, like child sex abuse material, is online due to the mainstreaming of pornographic content.

Despite viewing, possessing, and distributing child sex abuse material being federal crimes, child sex abuse material online has expanded, from 3,000 reports made in 1998, to 100,000 in 2008, to 1 million in 2014, and 18.4 million in 2018 with 45 million videos and images being flagged as "child sex abuse material."⁴ In 2023, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported that the CypberTipline received 36,210,368 reports of suspected child sexual exploitation.⁵ Further, child sex abuse material is a massive multibillion industry. One video file of child sex abuse material and child exploitation can go for \$1,200 US. With an estimated 300 million children being exploited annually through technology, the industry of child sex abuse is massive.⁶

The UN has reported on the acceleration of image-based sexual abuse and the expanded enterprise of humiliation, terrorism and violence against women and children through artificial intelligence (AI).⁷ A recent study found that Grok AI created 3 million sexualized images in under two weeks with 23,000 of those images depicting children.⁸

Though some argue that the creation and dissemination of child sex abuse material through AI is a harmless alternative to filmed or photographed child sex abuse, the



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psychological harms of AI on victims whose likeness has been used resemble those of children who've experienced child sex abuse in real life such as fear, anxiety, hypervigilance, loss of trust, and long-term professional harm.^{7,9} Also, 85% of people who have been convicted of possessing child sex abuse material have also committed hands-on crimes against children,⁵ so in the clear majority of cases, the crime of possessing and viewing child sex abuse material does not end at having access to visual material.

There is also the pressing issue of normalizing the abuse of children for sexual gratification. Problematic escalating behaviors among pornography consumers are not uncommon.^{10,11} After the novelty of one type of pornography wears off, people will seek more novel forms of pornography to get the same gratification as they did from less extreme content to the point of sexual dysfunction.^{12,13} As psychiatrist and author of *The Brain That Changes Itself*, Dr. Norma Doidge, stated:

"Pornography satisfies every one of the prerequisites for neuroplastic change. When pornographers boast that they are pushing the envelope by introducing new, harder themes, what they don't say is that they must, because their customers are building up a tolerance to the content."¹⁴

Candid qualitative evidence indicates there has been a shift towards acceptance of harmful behaviors directed at children. A study analyzing 13,292 reddit comments relating to child sex abuse material found that reddit users expressed disagreement on whether pedophilia is a crime, suggestions that child sex abuse material offers a "healthy release" to adults who want to have sex with children, disagreements on what constitutes as a minor, and whether depictions of teenagers was any different than adult women.¹⁵ Such anonymously held exchanges demonstrate that many people already see sexual behaviors with children as a "gray area" instead of harmful to minors who are easily manipulated by adults. These opinions should not be taken as negligible hypotheticals or dismissed as attitudes that are unlikely to have any impact on public criminality. Desensitization and normalization of children being depicted in sexual situations encourages public acquiescence to the sexual abuse of children.

HB 1294 expansion of child sex abuse material to include artificial intelligence generated content is the common sense step forward to address these issues in our ever-evolving technological landscape.

Women's Liberation Front encourages Maryland's general assembly to vote YES on HB 1294 to mitigate the harm being done on tech platforms through artificial intelligence.



Sincerely,

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¹ Kleinman, Alexis. Porn Sites Get More Visitors Each Month Than Netflix, Amazon And Twitter Combined. *Huffington Post*. May 4, 2013. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/internet-porn-stats_n_3187682

² Webroot. Internet Pornography by the Numbers. Accessed February 15, 2026. <https://www.webroot.com/us/en/resources/tips-articles/internet-pornography-by-the-numbers>

³ Miller v. California, 413 U.S. 15 (1973)

⁴ Keller MH, Dance GJX. The Internet Is Overrun With Images of Child Sexual Abuse. What Went Wrong? *The New York Times*. September 29, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/09/28/us/child-sex-abuse.html>

⁵ Miller W. When Pictures Aren't "Just Pictures": The Cost of Minimizing Child Sexual Abuse Material. *Homeland Security Today.US*. February 19, 2025. <https://www.hstoday.us/featured/when-pictures-arent-just-pictures-the-cost-of-minimizing-child-sexual-abuse-material/>

⁶ Fry D. Child sexual exploitation and abuse is a multibillion-dollar industry—new report shows who benefits. *Psy.org*. April 9, 2025. <https://phys.org/news/2025-04-child-sexualexploitation-abuse-multibillion.html>

⁷ Cerise S, Lentz S, Bates L, et al. How AI is exacerbating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls. *UN Women*. 2025. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/12/how-ai-is-exacerbating-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women-and-girls>

⁸ Boothe R. Grok AI generated about 3m sexualised images in 11 days, study finds. *The Guardian*. January 22, 2026. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2026/jan/22/grok-ai-generated-millions-sexualised-images-in-month-research-says>

⁹ American Academy of Pediatrics. The Impact of Deepfakes, Synthetic Pornography, & Virtual Child Sexual Abuse Material. Updated March 13, 2025. Accessed February 27, 2026. <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/media-and-children/center-of-excellence-on-social-media-and-youth-mental-health/qa-portal/qa-portal-library/qa-portal-library-questions/the-impact-of-deepfakes-synthetic-pornography--virtual-child-sexual-abuse-material/>



¹⁰ Wéry A, Billieux J. Online sexual activities: An exploratory study of problematic and non problematic usage patterns in a sample of men. *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol 56, pp. 257-266. March 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.11.046>

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¹¹ Campbell I, Albertella L, Liu C, et al. a Problematic pornography use and novel patterns of escalating use: A cross-sectional network analysis with two independent samples. *Addictive Behaviors*. Vol. 156. September 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2024.108048>

¹² Banca P, Morris LS, Mitchell S, et al. Novelty, conditioning and attentional bias to sexual rewards. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, Vol. 72, pp. 91–101. January 2016. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychires.2015.10.017>

¹³ Park BY, Wilson G, Berger J, et al. Is Internet Pornography Causing Sexual Dysfunctions? A Review with Clinical Reports. *Behavioral sciences* (Basel, Switzerland), 6(3), 17. August 2, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs6030017>

¹⁴ Doidge N. *The Brain That Changes Itself*. New York: Penguin Books. 2017.

¹⁵ Eelmaa S. Sexualization of Children in Deepfakes and Hentai. *TRAMES. A Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*. Vol. 26, Iss 2, pp. 229-248. <https://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2022.2.07>

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