

Maryland Coalition Against Pornography, Inc.

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TOGETHER WE CARE

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In support of HB 623

The immensity of the problem of child porn continues to escalate. 25 million images are reviewed by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children annually. That's 480,769 images of child exploitation per week. They document actual crime scenes and are then circulated for personal consumption. Those currently participating can connect in ever more and different ways, facilitated through a wide variety of internet technology, including websites, email, instant messaging/ICQ, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), newsgroups, bulletin boards, peer-to-peer networks, internet gaming sites, social networking sites, and anonymized networks. The scope takes your breath away.

Deterrence plays a part in combatting this crime. The threat of truly significant monetary penalties and prison time needs to be enacted and communicated. There is not much deterrence in a charge of a misdemeanor or a maximum fine of \$2500. Ask yourself: *if it was your child* whose sexually-compromised image was being used, does that penalty seem adequate? The federal government, and our neighboring jurisdictions of DC, Virginia, Delaware, and Pennsylvania provide for this crime to be a felony, as do most other states in the country. Why not Maryland? We need to bring our code in line.

Respectfully submitted,
Peggy Cairns, Education Chair, Silver Spring, MD