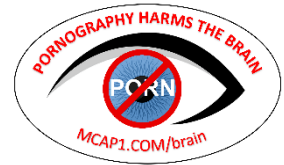


Maryland Coalition Against Pornography, Inc.

P.O. Box 2868
Silver Spring, MD 20915-2868
mcapinc@mcap1.com
www.mcap1.com
(301) 439-8475



TOGETHER WE CARE

March 23, 2022

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Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, Maryland Senate

In support of HB 194 (Favorable)

We thank Delegate Shetty for sponsoring this bill, and for her work in prior years examining problematic sexualized behavior by minors. We commend the intent of this bill to bring the issue of sexting into discussions in the sex education realm in public schools. Sadly, it has become all too common of a 21st century risky behavior that needs to be warned against. Many parents or guardians may not be aware of how common the practice of sexting has become and that it is starting at younger and younger ages. Compounding the problem is they often are not as tech-savvy as their children, and lack ability to shield their children from the dangers.

A study published in *JAMA* ([Prevalence of Multiple Forms of Sexting Behavior Among Youth](#)) – (2018, so already 4 years old) indicated that:

- At least 1 in 4 teens are receiving sexually explicit texts and emails
- At least 1 in 7 are sending sexts
- More than 1 in 10 teens are forwarding sexts without consent
- About 1 in 12 teens have had sexts they've sent forwarded without their consent

That JAMA article comments that sexting is a predictor of sexual behavior and may be associated with other health outcomes and risky behaviors. It is intertwined with cyberbullying and can lead to anxiety and depression. Depending on the content and ages of those sharing it, there may be criminal issues of child porn distribution. Given that the average age of getting a smartphone is 10 years old, inclusion of the issue in elementary school curricula is not too early. Children are trading nude photos of each other like baseball cards and using the Iphone Airdrop feature to randomly send porn on school buses, sporting events, cafeterias, etc. They certainly need to seriously learn the concept of CONSENT.

We hope that there will be opportunity for input by the public on how this is to be taught in the schools.

Sexting is a genie that has gotten out of the bottle and is not going away. It needs to be addressed sooner rather than later.

Respectfully,
Peggy Cairns, Education Chairperson
and Mary Modderman, President