

Maryland Coalition Against Pornography, Inc.

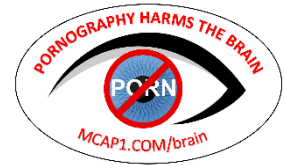
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TOGETHER WE CARE

January 25, 2022

Chairman, Vanessa Atterbeary
Ways and Means Committee, Maryland House of Delegates

In support of HB 194

Christian Men's
Ministries

Donna Rice Hughes
President
"Enough Is Enough"

Dr. Jerry Kirk
Chairman and Founder
pureHOPE

Bishop David Perrin
Senior Pastor
Christ Kingdom Church

Roberta Roper
Maryland Crime Victims'
Resource Center, Inc.

Patrick A. Trueman
President
National Center on
Sexual Exploitation

Dr. Ann Yeck
Marriage and Family
Therapist
Licensed Psychologist

The Rev. Curtis Young
Pastor Emeritus
Presbyterian Church
of the Atonement

We wish to thank Delegate Shetty for sponsoring this bill, and for the work she has done 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. Unfortunately, it has become all too common of a 21st century problem 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, nor are they always tech-savvy enough to be shielding 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