



## NATIONAL CENTER ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

March 1, 2023

Chairman C. T. Wilson  
House Economic Matters Committee  
Room 231, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Wilson and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the National Center on Sexual Exploitation, an organization with a mission to expose all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, I urge you to support HB 1082, a strategic solution to protect children from exposure to harmful content online.

HB 1082, Protection of Minors from Unfiltered Devices, recognizes the severe harm to children due to pornography exposure. NCOSE's Research Institute reviewed over 100 research articles, surveys, and reports on pornography--and the findings were startling. Adolescent exposure to pornography is connected with pornography addiction, objectification of women and girls, risky sexual behaviors, increased physical and sexual victimization, and sexually aggressive behavior.

A 2022 survey found that 52% of 13- to 17-year-olds who had been exposed to pornography (73% of 1300+ sample) saw violent pornography including choking (36%), someone in pain (37%), or depictions of what appeared to be rape (19%). HB 1082 provides a legislative solution: require smartphones and tablets activated in Maryland to default to safety by automatically setting the filtering technology to "ON" upon activation.

Big Tech is fully capable of this change. In 2021, Google defaulted Chromebooks and products for K-12 to safety for all users under 18. This change came after an outcry from parents, child protection advocates, and NCOSE when reports of children exposed to sexually explicit material and predators through their school-issued devices increased. A year later, Apple took similar steps and updated its parental controls to improve child safety. Both changes resulted from advocacy from child protection advocates and collaboration with Big Tech to recognize their role in protecting children online.

This bill empowers parents to take charge of what material is appropriate for their children while not being burdensome for tech companies to implement nor infringe on adult access to pornography. It is a feasible and necessary change to protect children from serious harm online.

We urge you to support this commonsense measure to protect Maryland's youth!

Sincerely,

Eleanor Kennelly Gaetan  
Vice President & Director of Public Policy