



**House Judiciary Committee
Room 101
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401**

February 10, 2022

RE: HB 600 (Lopez) Nonconsensual sexual imagery task force – SPONSOR / SUPPORT

Dear Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

The National Women's Political Caucus is pleased to sponsor LR 1891 which would establish a taskforce to evaluate how to prevent and respond to nonconsensual sexual imagery, also known as 'cyberflashing', while respecting First Amendment rights and making recommendations for legislation to address the conduct evaluated.

The National Women's Political Caucus is a multi-partisan grassroots organization dedicated to increasing women's participation in the political process. NWPC recruits, trains and supports women candidates for elected and appointed offices at all levels of government. The National Women's Political Caucus has worked for 52 years to ensure gender parity in politics and to create a more equitable and safe world for women. Women's safety in online spaces is included in that.

Everyone should feel safe online, but we know that people - especially women - experience online harassment consistently. When our organization was founded, online harassment did not yet exist. Now, women running for office and living their day-to-day lives are inundated with online threats and the sending of unwanted lewd content. In recent years, we've seen women in politics receive nonconsensual sexual imagery in record numbers. This leaves women feeling violated, less trusting of others, and wary to continue their runs for office.

These behaviors occur across every job sector and across all ages. Images and videos are sent via text, email, and direct message, and are even "AirDropped" in public places. Tech and phone companies can only do so much to curb this abhorrent behavior. The National Women's Political Caucus is counting on state and local lawmakers to fill the gaps where tech companies fall short.

HB 600 aims to research this problem head-on, ensuring we explore how the law can act as a deterrent and a reminder that if it's not okay in person, it shouldn't be tolerated digitally. The aim is not to curtail free expression, and we in no way want to stifle communication between consenting adults. Standards of acceptable behavior online should match those in real life.

For all these reasons, the National Women's Political Caucus respectfully urges your "AYE" vote on HB 600.

Sincerely,

Donna Lent
President, NWPC