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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB ~~722~~

Internet-Connected Devices and Internet Service Providers – Default Filtering
of Obscene Content (Maryland Online Child Protection Act)

Chair C. T. Wilson
Vice Chair Brian M. Crosby
Room 231
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Members of the Economic Matters Committee

My name is De'Asia Wiggins. In 2020, I moved from Washington, DC to Houston where I attend Texas Southern University. I'm 20 years old.

I am here to support HB 772, the Maryland Online Child Protection Act, a commonsense bill that mandates safety settings on cell phones and tablets activated in Maryland. Specifically, this bill requires filters blocking hardcore pornography to be automatically turned on, providing essential protection for minors against exposure to harmful online content.

I learned about this bill from the National Center on Sexual Exploitation, a group based in Washington, DC. I worked with NCOSE in 2019.

One of the realities that NCOSE talks about – and I have lived – is that many forms of sexual exploitation are connected to each other.

So, for example, the constant exposure kids are getting to very violent pornography through phones has led to an increase in sexual violence that kids are committing against each other. Nurses in Emergency Rooms across the country are reporting this.

Everyone has these phones, but not everyone has parents to put filters on them or to limit their use of the devices.

My adopted Mother died when I was 11 years old. After that, I lived with many different relatives, then foster families I wasn't related to, then many group homes. Due to the lack of supervision, I explored hardcore pornography which created unrealistic ideas. I tried to imitate those scenes which put me in very dangerous situations.

Plenty of kids I knew, and lived with, accessed hardcore pornography at a young age. This material is very violent and very degrading. I also believe that there is a link between pornography and bullying.

Adults have NO IDEA what we are seeing. And kids act out on other kids as a result. I have friends who have been choked, slapped, spanked, and raped because that's what people using pornography think sex is about. This is also happening to boys not just girls.

The situation could be quickly improved if it was harder to access pornography on our devices—AUTOMATICALLY, as HB 772 would require.

Don't tell me it is hard for these multi-zillion dollar companies to figure it out. That's a joke.

The current situation is creating real danger and pain.

I sincerely hope you vote for the KIDS in this case, not the BIG TECH LOBBYISTS paid to distract you from real people like me.

Thank you.