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TO: Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Detective Kayla Staub

REF: SB113 Sexual Solicitation of a Minor

DATE: January 22, 2024

My name is Kayla Staub, and I am a Detective with the Frederick County Sheriff's Office where I have been for the past seven-and-a-half years. I am currently assigned to the Internet Crimes Against Children Unit (ICAC). During my career as a police officer, I served five years on patrol, one year investigating child abuse and sexual abuse cases, and have been assigned to ICAC for approximately one year.

Founded in 2018, the primary mission of the Frederick County Sheriff's Office ICAC Unit is to conduct thorough investigations into internet-driven crimes against children, including offenses such as child sexual assault material (CSAM), trafficking, and online luring. Collaborating closely with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and various state and federal agencies, the Frederick County Sheriff's Office ICAC Unit is dedicated to combating online child predation and other computer-facilitated crimes targeting children. In addition, the Frederick County Sheriff's Office ICAC Unit plays a crucial role in increasing awareness through outreach services and educating communities about the susceptibility of children to cybercrime and the significant consequences of technology-driven crimes on young individuals.

Through training, investigators are taught several techniques and guidelines that must be followed when communicating with individuals while using the persona of a minor. The guidelines include but are not limited to, not initiating a

conversation with an adult, including direct messaging, and responding to online Ads. Furthermore, the Undercover detective (UC) posing as a minor cannot initiate a sexualized conversation.

Throughout my experience of undercover investigations as of April 2023, I've been solicited for explicit images numerous times, while posing as a 13-year-old female minor. During that time, three of the four males who solicited explicit images, traveled to Frederick County, MD intending to engage in several sex acts. As an example, I have been on a known online chat platform that sexual child predators frequently use, and I was solicited within seconds of joining the chatroom for explicit images by several individuals. Almost every individual that I've communicated with as a minor, has solicited nude images. These individuals will promise not to share those images and promise not to screenshot or save the images. Furthermore, some of these individuals will promise some sort of payment. Additionally, these individuals attempt to move to a different social media platform, such as Snapchat, believing those images, videos, and chat will "disappear" and make the child more comfortable sending and exchanging sexual images.

Although vulgar, I think it is important for lawmakers to know how direct and persistent these predators can be. Here are some examples of messages that I have personally received while posing as a 13 year old female:

- "Never too young. Show me pics of you and that pussy you got."
"Show me your pussy I love young pussy."
- "Pull your panties down right now and send me a picture of your pussy"
- "Can you please send me a pic of it promise I will not show anyone?"
- "Showing me a pic of your pussy is no different."
- "If you wont send me a pic of that pussy how about a pic of you in your panties."
- "Why would a pic of your pussy be embarrassing? You got a piece of gold there with in being untouched."
- Can I get a pic of that pussy now
- I don't care how big or small your boobs are. I will delete it that picture. Cut off your face, and no one would ever know. Its not hard to send a picture like that
- If I send you a picture of my cock, will you send me a picture of your pussy

While some of these dangerous individuals who prey on children, don't travel to engage in the sexual act, they still have gained access to explicit nude images/videos of children. That child becomes vulnerable in many ways, including being extorted for money, or threatening that those images will be exposed. This can cause psychological damage to the child, and in some cases, the child will attempt to harm themselves, unfortunately, some are successful at

committing suicide due to the damage those individuals caused to the child. Not only can the child be extorted for money, but these child predators exchange those images/videos with other individuals who share the same interest in children. In today's world, with electronics, different forms of social media platforms that have end-to-end encryption make it easier to exchange those images with lower expectations they'll be exposed.

In my experience of undercover chatting, these individuals will often admit to engaging in chatting, exchanging images, and/or engaging in a sexual act with a child.

A recent case, that I conducted posing a 13-year-old minor, revealed this individual chatting with numerous minors, and admitting to exchanging explicit nude images with two minors the evening before traveling to Frederick County, MD to engage in several sexual acts with whom he believed was a 13-year-old minor. Additionally, this case, revealed this individual communicating with a minor residing in Maryland. This individual admitted to communicating with the minor, furthermore, stating he currently possesses child pornography of that victim on his device.

These dangerous individuals receive sexual gratification, stimulation, and satisfaction from contact with children; or from fantasies they may have viewing children engaged in sexual activity or sexually suggestive poses, such as in person, in photographs, or in other visual media.

I support Senate Bill 113 to augment the sexual solicitation of a minor to include the solicitation of child pornography during undercover chat investigations. I have conducted several undercover online investigations and each time, I am online I am solicited for nude images. For every child sexual predator, I'm chatting with, there is one real child not being victimized by being solicited for explicit nude images and/or sexual acts.