



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 4th, 2025

HB05

Criminal Law - Child Pornography - Artificial Intelligence Software

Judiciary

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of House Bill 05. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 05 would expand the definition of "computer-generated image" in child pornography laws to explicitly include images created using artificial intelligence (AI) software. By doing so, it ensures that AI-generated depictions of child exploitation are treated as criminal offenses under existing laws, closing potential legal loopholes that could allow offenders to evade prosecution.

This bill strengthens legal protection for children by addressing emerging threats posed by AI-generated exploitative content. It ensures that individuals who create or distribute such material are held accountable, thereby deterring criminal activity and fostering a safer digital environment. Additionally, it aids law enforcement in prosecuting cases more effectively by clarifying that AI-generated content is just as harmful as traditionally produced exploitative material.

Catholic social teaching upholds the inherent dignity of every human being, with a particular emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable, especially children. This legislation reflects the moral duty to defend the innocence and well-being of minors from exploitation. Supporting this bill reinforces the principles of justice, safeguards human dignity, and affirms our collective responsibility to foster a society that prioritizes child protection. Furthermore, it acknowledges the growing risks posed by digital technology, taking a proactive stance against online threats, including cyberbullying, which can have lasting effects on mental health. By enacting this measure, we ensure that safeguarding children remains a top priority in an evolving digital landscape.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on **House Bill 05**.