

SB 736: Criminal Law - Obscene Matter - Visual Representation of Child: Please vote to **SUPPORT** this bill.

Dear Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am writing to strongly urge you to **SUPPORT SB 736** during the upcoming hearing in the Judicial Proceedings Committee on March 3, 2026.

SB 736 would update Maryland's laws on obscene matter and visual representations of children by **raising the protected age from under 16 to under 18** for depictions involving sexual conduct, sadomasochistic abuse, or states of sexual excitement **(including computer-generated or simulated images that are indistinguishable from real minors)**. It also **strengthens penalties for possession, retention, access, and viewing of such material; allows victims depicted in these representations to pursue civil actions**; and requires the Attorney General to provide annual reporting on enforcement.

With the rise of AI-generated and computer-simulated child sexual abuse material, current law's age limit of 16 **leaves 16- and 17-year-olds inadequately protected against exploitation in obscene visual content**. Extending protections to under 18 aligns with federal standards (e.g., 18 U.S.C. § 2256 defining "minor" as under 18 for child pornography) and recognizes that minors up to age 17 remain vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. These reforms close dangerous gaps, **deter creation and distribution of harmful material, enhance prosecution tools, and provide civil remedies for victims**—critical steps to combat the growing threat of digital child exploitation without infringing on legitimate expression.

Maryland must prioritize the safety and dignity of all minors by modernizing these laws to address evolving technology and ensure consistent, robust protections against child sexual abuse imagery in any form.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask you to vote **in favor of SB 736** and help strengthen safeguards for children in our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this vital child protection legislation.

Sincerely,

Trudy Tibbals