



**TOGETHER WE WILL - HARFORD COUNTY
TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
House Bill 670**

Criminal Law - Child Pornography - Prohibitions and Penalties

Position: Support

By: Dawn Sacks, Board Secretary

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As an inclusive and diverse group of neighbors seeking to create a just community where all can thrive, Together We Will - Harford County supports HB670.

The first and best concern of any community is the protection of its children. For this reason, the production, distribution, and viewing of child pornography is by definition a most vile criminal act. All of these crimes involve the sexual assault of children, first in the production and then in the sharing and viewing of these horrific materials.

The increasing use of enhanced technology has created an explosion in the amount of such materials, the methods of production, and the ease of sharing. In a circle of escalation, availability increases demand, which increases production, which increases demand, ad infinitum. Availability increases exposure, leading to desensitization, which creates demand for escalating levels of assault. The victims get younger, the materials get more graphic, the assaults become more violent and horrific. The market for child sexual assault materials grows.

HB670 helps to address the problem by:

- Clarifying what constitutes a child sexual assault image
- Aiding effective and timely prosecution by specifying how child sexual assault materials can be counted and batched for prosecution and sentencing
- Enhancing the penalties for possession of large amounts of child sexual assault materials
- Creating a specific charge for possession of child sexual assault materials depicting children under the age of 13.

While enhancing penalties, the bill allows court discretion by providing that a sentence may be consecutive to or concurrent with a sentence imposed for certain other crimes.

Maryland must do everything it can to protect our children and prosecute those who harm them.

We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB670.