

HB 0710
Judiciary Committee — Hearing of March 5, 2026
FAV testimony from Bullard Esq. Law, Middletown, MD

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

We testify in favor of House Bill 0710.

Our contemporary culture is saturated in pornography to such an extent that many historical boundaries that safe-guarded children and youth from exposure to adult sexuality have eroded.

Pornography and obscene images cause serious harms to children, eviscerating their moral personhood in crucial developmental years of vulnerability. For example consider that:

Adolescents who view violent pornography are known to re-enact that violence. Faye Chadwick-Brown, Joyce J Endendijk, "Associations Between Sexualized Media Consumption, Sexual Double Standards, and Sexual Coercion Perpetration and Victimization in Late Adolescent Sexually Active Boys and Girls from The Netherlands" *Arch Sex Behav.* 2024 Sep 3. doi: 10.1007/s10508-024-02988-1, accessed October 17, 2024.

"A child addicted to pornography has more difficulty forming stable relationships and is more likely to suffer from mental health problems." Michael Toscano, *Online Age Verification Laws Are a Bet Worth Making | Opinion, Newsweek*, <https://www.newsweek.com/online-age-verification-laws-are-bet-worth-making-opinion-1874764>, accessed October 17, 2024. "Online porn companies are addicting American kids because addiction keeps children on their platforms, where they can be primed for manipulation by graphic advertisements from third parties." *Id.*

Female students state that pornography creates "difficulty saying 'no' to unwanted or humiliating sexual practices" Mónica Fernández-Ruiz, Olga María López-Entrambasaguas, Jose Manuel Martínez-Linares, José Granero-Molina, "Young Women's Attitudes and Concerns Regarding Pornography and Their Sexual Experiences: A Qualitative Approach," *Healthcare (Basel)*. 2023 Nov 1;11(21): 2877. doi: 10.3390/healthcare11212877, accessed October 17, 2024. We emphasize that the anodyne phrase "unwanted sexual practices," signifies absence of consent and indicates sexual assault.

Average first exposure to pornography is about age 12 and, "52% of teens report seeing violent or aggressive behavior in pornography." In addition,

• Frequent pornography use may lead to feelings of social isolation and loneliness, lower levels of self-confidence, anxiety, stress, and depression.

• Pornography use is addictive in nature and the neural changes in the brains of users are similar to those seen in individuals addicted to cocaine, alcohol, and methamphetamines.

• Juvenile sex-offenders self-report pornography use at higher rates than juvenile non- sexual criminal offenders." American College of Pediatricians, Factsheet: The Impact of Pornography on Children, available at https://acpeds.org/assets/positionpapers/factsheet_-the-impact-of-pornography-on-children.pdf, accessed October 17, 2024.

"Children under twelve years old who have viewed pornography are statistically more likely to sexually assault their peers." American College of Pediatricians, The Impact of Pornography on Children, Updated August 2024, at 2, available at: <https://acpeds.org/assets/positionpapers/the-impact-of-pornography-on-children-august-2024.pdf>, accessed October 17, 2024 (internal citations omitted).

Such harms inflicted upon children by obscene images (also called, pornography) constitute child abuse and it is the state's duty to adequately safe-guard children from such abuse.

Sexual abuse of children includes indoctrinating children into early sexuality and hyper-sexuality by exposing them pornography

Exposure of children to obscenity and pornography is abuse and is a gateway to further sexual abuse, trafficking and coercion of children into self-produced porn, and /or participation in pornographic filming. For example, Joann Kelly, aka Buku Abi, suffered sexual abuse by her father R. Kelly, which abuse was filmed and shared as pornography. Samantha Chery, R. Kelly's daughter alleges singer sexually abused her as a child, Washington Post, Oct. 13, 2023 available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/style/2024/10/13/buku-abi-r-kelly-daughter-sexual-abuse-documentary/>, accessed Oct. 14, 2024.

"Sexual predators have purposefully exposed young children to pornography for the purpose of grooming them for sexual exploitation." Amercian College of Pediatrics, Patient Handout: Porn-Proof Your Children August 2024, available at: https://acpeds.org/assets/positionpapers/_parent-handout-pornography-8.24.pdf, accessed October 17, 2024.

In *State v. Dearth*, 211 N.E.3d 246, 248–49 (Ohio 2023), the investigating Sgt. Kisor testified that during a forensic interview of the abused children, allegations arose that Dearth sexually molested a granddaughter, and that Dearth showed pornography to the children while they were visiting his home."

The child abused in *State v. Taylor*, 966 N.W. 330 (Iowa Ct. App. 2001) was shown pornography by the abuser.

In *Grado v. State*, the State's expert Dr. Witcher testified that the accused "showed pornography to a child he abused." *Grado v. State*, 559 S.W.3d 888, 898–99 (Mo. 2018), opinion modified on denial of reh'g (Dec. 4, 2018)

For these reasons, we testify in favor of HB 0710 and urge the Committee to act with great support for this bill.

Sincerely,

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