



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 924 – Child Exploitation Material - Civil and Criminal Actions (Safe Kids Act)

Good afternoon, Chairman and members of the Committee. For the record, I am Delegate LaToya Nkongolo, representing District 31 and I am here today to present House Bill 924, the SAFE Kids Act. This Bill has received bipartisan support as we recognize that protecting the innocence of children is not a party issue, it is the responsibility of all adults.

As a mental health professional and a parent, I have firsthand experience of the impact the digital world is having on our children. While technology connects us, it has left our children open to exploitation. Today, children are increasingly represented in pornography content. The social and developmental harm caused by this exploitation is profound and the emergence of AI-generated exploitation has majorly increased child pornographic content online.

The goal of this act is clear: we must deter websites from hosting material that depict children in sexually exploitative manner, whether those images are real or generated through artificial intelligence. The content fuels a marketplace for child abuse and causes severe mental health difficulties for our youth, including high rates of depression, anxiety, PTSD, and suicidal ideation.

The SAFE Kids Act provides the necessary tools to fight this: The act explicitly defines 'computer-generated image' to include those created through artificial intelligence software in addition to real images. Ensuring that predators cannot hide behind technicalities whether they used a software program or a camera. It authorizes the Attorney General to prosecute which allows the state to take swift action to have this material taken down immediately, especially when a child's body or mental health is at risk. It creates a pathways for parents and guardians to sue online platforms when they knowingly and intentionally distribute this material, which acts as a powerful deterrent for websites that currently profit from or turn a blind eye to exploitation. Finally, it updates our laws to protect all children under the age of 18, ensuring consistency across our criminal and civil codes.

This bill is about protecting the most vulnerable among us. By allowing for civil lawsuits that will hold hosting platforms accountable, we can move decisively to protect children's bodies and their mental health. We want to make Maryland a leader in digital safety and a state where the exploitation of children—in any form—is met with the full gravity of the law.

I urge a favorable report on House Bill 924. Thank you.