

Chairman Merrin, Vice chairman Manning, Ranking member Boyd and members of the House Health Committee, I am Barry Sheets, legislative consultant for the Institute for Principled Policy and for Ohio Values Voters, whom I speak on behalf of today.

Thank you for considering House Resolution 180, which would declare pornography to be a public health hazard and show the connections between pornography creation & use and the scourge of human trafficking.

Representative Powell and her co-sponsors are to be applauded for bringing public attention to this issue. We are seeing more and more how our culture is being impacted by what was colloqually called "the Playboy philosophy" in the mid 20th century. Now we are seeing the fruits of this poisoned tree.

Just this last weekend, in their "4th and Goal" sting, Attorney General Dave Yost announced the arrest of 104 individuals on prostitution and soliciting charges. Many of those soliciting charges were against individuals seeking to engage in sex with underage children. Normally functioning human beings don't just wake up one morning and decide to have sex with a minor and travel halfway across the state to do so. This type of faulty decision-making is usually the result of extensive exposure to pornography, with escalation into more deviant forms, and then acting out.

Our culture is also witnessing the increase in the cases of child pornography, improper sexual relationships between teachers and students, and in human trafficking. Ohio is the fourth ranked state in the country for human trafficking, and has seen growing numbers of the cases I mentioned previously. Again, normally functioning individuals do not live their lives seeking out such deviant or anti-societal behaviors. Pornography plays a key role in shaping such aberrant thought patterns.

Brain research indicates exposure to pornographic materials affects brain chemistry similar to opioids, can create addictive thought patterns and behaviors, and re-wire neural pathways. Also, just like drug addiction, the user has to seek greater and stronger doses (in this case harder-core and more deviant pornography) in order to have the same satisfaction levels over time. This is a recipe for a public mental health crisis that virtually no one wants to acknowledge or have a conversation about addressing the crisis.

HR 180 can help spur those conversations, and with continued attention to the problem, lead to solutions to help those whose lives are impacted by pornography, whether the user or the used.

Thank you for your kind attention to my comments, and I look forward to seeing this measure favorably reported from committee. I would be happy to take questions of the committee.