

Chairman Derek Merrin, Vice Chairman Don Manning, Ranking Member Janine Boyd and Members of the House Health Committee:

My name is Joel Wharton, LPCC-S (Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor - Supervisor) and I have had the privilege of serving the mental health and relationship needs of our community for the past 18 years in a private practice setting. I also worked as a Children's Services Caseworker in Hamilton County, Ohio; Child Advocate in Florida; and Graduate School Counseling Intern in Kentucky for a total of five additional years. During the vast majority of these years, I have worked with numerous men battling sexual addictions that ALWAYS included pornography. In fact, based on my anecdotal evidence and experience, the average age of first exposure to pornographic material was 11 years old. I greatly fear that this present generation will experience a far earlier age of exposure due to the overwhelming availability of unprotected Internet access.

I write today to share my professional opinion that pornography contributes to the degradation of our society, the unraveling of genuine love and intimacy in marital relationships, and the objectification of our sexual bodies. That which was designed for a selfless expression of love and bondedness has been turned into a warped self-centeredness where the partner only exists to serve the hedonistic desires of the other. This distortion of love and sexuality diminishes our humanness and unsuccessfully attempts to fulfill our legitimate need for closeness with an empty, false intimacy. The result is a never-ending cycle of meaningless "attachments" to images, actors, and fantasies that provide a moment of physical satisfaction but completely misses the deeper longing for relational connectedness.

Perhaps it is easy to assume that pornography is largely a victimless activity. This is a tragic and horrific error in judgment. The list of victims includes the pornography user, the actors and actresses (often criminally manipulated, trafficked, and controlled), the spouse of the user, the children of the user, the families of the actors and actresses, and the list grows outward from there. How is it that pornographers enjoy the constitutional protection of freedom of speech when their activities cost us so much? I grow weary of standing in the ditches with individuals trying to recover from the consequences of pornography. Yet, I remain part of their story because pornography does NOT get the final statement in their lives...freedom from addiction is possible! The reconciliation of broken relationships is possible! Restoration of individual lives is possible!

The devastating impact of pornography on our society is a health crisis! How many clinical hours have psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, and social workers billed insurance to assist

those in need of treatment for sexual addiction? Chances are these records are confidentially protected under HIPPA Laws. There's irony in that statement. We have to protect the confidentiality of the victims of sexual addiction, sexual assault, etc. and yet provide no preemptive protection for them. I have no more words...

Please do something....my sons are 12 and 13 and I'm fighting for their innocence....please help me!

Respectfully Submitted,

Joel Wharton, LPCC-S  
(614) 668-1967  
[Jwharton@heritagecc.org](mailto:Jwharton@heritagecc.org)

Joel Wharton  
Care Pastor  
(614) 898-9412  
[Jwharton@heritagecc.org](mailto:Jwharton@heritagecc.org)