



SUPPORT for Ohio HB295 The Innocence Act

Written Testimony from [Women's Liberation Front](#)
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The Women's Liberation Front (WoLF) is a 501(C)3 radical feminist organization dedicated to defending, restoring, and advancing the rights of women and girls. Our key policy areas include the eradication of porn and ending male violence against women.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB295. This bill provides three important mechanisms that defend the rights of women and girls:

1. Require age-verification to prevent minors from accessing harmful materials.
2. Prohibit anyone from creating deepfake AI porn images using another person's image.
3. Creating private right-of-action for these prohibited activities.

HB295 takes a reasonable approach in seeking to establish liability for publishing or distributing porn to minors on the internet. The Women's Liberation Front supports this approach.

Things changed when the porn industry moved to the internet. Access to porn has always been age-restricted. Anyone seeking to buy a magazine containing pornography must be over 18 and provide ID. Similarly, one cannot enter establishments where women or men will be stripping until nude unless an adult. Minors cannot enter shops selling sexual merchandise, such as vibrators, or rent adult videos.

Why, then, should accessing porn on the internet be any different?

And yet, it's freely and ubiquitously available to minors across a myriad of sites, with no proof of adulthood required. The porn industry, in its shift to the internet, has operated free of the legal age-verification restrictions that has always existed for storefronts and venues. HB295 rectifies that.

Porn content has significantly changed. Previously, porn was produced in studios, with paid actors. Now, content is made globally, uploaded from anywhere, and paid actors aren't needed. Pornhub is the leading distributor of porn videos in the United States, and the 10th most visited website in the world, according to the New York Times. They don't curate uploaded content, though they heavily monetize it. From a 2020 New York Times article written by Nicholas Kristof regarding Pornhub:

"Its site is infested with rape videos. It monetizes child rapes, revenge pornography, spy cam videos of women showering, racist and misogynist content, and footage of women being asphyxiated in plastic bags. A search for "girls under18" (no space) or "14yo" leads

in each case to more than 100,000 videos. Most aren't of children being assaulted, but too many are."

When victims discover their video, and plead to have them removed, which continues to victimize them, Pornhub does not respond or takes forever to get the video down.

Porn content is increasingly violent to women and girls. The **American Bar Association** discusses the harms of porn on their website, and one harm that they, and we, would highlight, is that porn promotes aggression towards women.

"Pornography is arguably more sexist and hostile towards women than other sexual images in the media.¹¹ The aggression and violence towards women found in much of today's popular pornography can teach boys and young men that it is socially acceptable, and even desirable, to behave aggressively towards and demean women. Pornography also portrays people and sexual relationships that do not accurately reflect how real people look and act and behave in intimate relationships. Unrealistic expectations of intimate partners may impede youths' ability to build and maintain healthy relationships.

A 2009 analysis of studies on pornography and violence towards women reveals a significant relationship between pornography consumption and attitudes supporting violence towards women.¹⁸ The relationship is much stronger for violent as compared to nonviolent pornography.¹⁹ A 2001-2004 survey of middle and high school youth found 76% of boys who reported committing some form of sexual harassment also reported use of sexually explicit media.²⁰

The Women's Liberation Front is committed to ending male violence against women. There is a clear nexus between pornography and violence against women and girls.

Harms of Porn Exposure to Minors: This is well documented, and lately, has received a lot of publicity. **UNICEF** said,

"Exposure to pornography at a young age may lead to poor mental health, sexism and objectification, sexual violence, and other negative outcomes. Among other risks, when children view pornography that portrays abusive and misogynistic acts, they may come to view such behaviour as normal and acceptable."

UNICEF is alarmed by the massive quantity of pornography available online, including increasingly graphic and extreme content that is easily accessible to children of all ages. Efforts to regulate content and restrict children's access to pornography have not kept pace with technological shifts that have profoundly altered the landscape for the consumption of pornography. While many jurisdictions have effectively restricted children's access to pornography in non-digital media, including by making it illegal to distribute pornography to children or knowingly expose them to it, efforts to do the same in digital environments have not been effective.

UNICEF supports the efforts of governments to ensure that children are protected from harmful content in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the authoritative guidance from the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The **American College of Pediatricians** said,

“The availability and use of pornography has become almost ubiquitous among adults and adolescents. Consumption of pornography is associated with many negative emotional, psychological, and physical health outcomes. These include increased rates of depression, anxiety, acting out and violent behavior, younger age of sexual debut, sexual promiscuity, increased risk of teen pregnancy, and a distorted view of relationships between men and women. For adults, pornography results in an increased likelihood of divorce which is also harmful to children. “

It's long been documented that children's brains are not finished forming fully until about the age of 25. The last stage of formation is socialization – the brain requires intense socialization to finish forming its neurological connections. If the socialization children receive is heavily laden with porn, the social roles they are being taught are far outside societal norms. Porn may also have a stronger effect on children because they will mirror behaviors as part of their brain's ongoing development. While an adult might not mirror what they see in porn in the outside world, youth lack such social filters. To them, what they see in media is concrete, real. They will use it in modeling their own behavior socially, a terrible outcome.

There is no need to speculate whether young children are being exposed to pornography. Pop star **Billie Eilish** publicly admitted that porn exposure at age 11 really 'messed me up.'

“I think it really destroyed my brain and I feel incredibly devastated that I was exposed to so much porn,” she added, saying she suffered nightmares because some of the content she watched was so violent and abusive.

Porn sites and tech companies do not take appropriate responsibility for the materials they distribute nor the harms they cause. Government intervention is therefore required. New Mexico's attorney general Raul Torrez is presently suing Meta for indiscriminately serving porn to minors, and targeting them for prostitution and sexual assault.

42 Attorneys General, including Ohio's Dave Yost, are suing Meta for harms to minors caused by their algorithms. “Thirty-two percent of teen girls said that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel worse,” [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported.

Age-verification laws have successfully withstood legal challenges.

Laws like Ohio's HB295 have been passed in other states. Pornhub sued Louisiana, Texas, and Utah, through their proxy, the Free Speech Coalition, to stop these laws. The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals just ruled against Pornhub in Texas on March 7, 2024:

“The Texas law doesn't violate the First Amendment because it serves the government's “legitimate interest” of keeping children from viewing porn,” Judge Jerry E. Smith wrote.

Pornhub's lawsuit against the state of Utah for their age-verification law was dismissed by a federal judge.

Deepfake AI Images Are Exploding, and Catching Governments Off-Guard Globally.

We very much appreciate the inclusion of this piece of legislation. When it first started happening, we saw the impact to women in the Muslim world. Young women faced honor killings and beatings from their families because an image had circulated with their head on a porn-star's body, and no one could tell it was fake. US Congressional Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez just experienced this, when a fake nude image was circulated of her. Taylor Swift was also victimized with fake AI sexualized images of her, circulated widely. A New Jersey school was caught unawares when a girl experienced boys circulating a deepfake AI porn image of her. The school administrators, police, and her parents were stunned, but also uncertain as to what, if any, laws had been broken. These images can circulate for years, coming back to haunt a victim well into the future, who had nothing to do with their production.

England and Wales are criminalizing the making of deepfake AI porn images, as is the Czech Republic. The European Union is proposing the same. The United States proposed several bills on this subject in 2023 and 2024, but none have made it out of committee. States are racing to fill the gap.

Fake porn images victimize women by inserting them into degrading porn images without their participation or consent. It is therefore a form of violence to women and girls, and the Women's Liberation Front applauds Ohio's efforts with HB 295 to stop it.

In closing, we heartily agree with the aims of **HB295 and are happy to support this legislation**. We applaud legislation like this, and the actions of Attorneys General to prevent harms to minors and boost internet safety.

We welcome your questions and we are happy to serve as a resource for you.

Kind regards,

Sharon Byrne, Executive Director, Women's Liberation Front

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<https://www.womensliberationfront.org/>