Proponent Testimony HB 84
House Technology and Innovation Committee
Catholic Conference of Ohio
March 18th, 2025

Chair Claggett, Vice Chair Workman, Ranking Member Mohamed, and members of the House Technology and Innovation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony today. My name is Will Kuehnle, and I am an associate director with the Catholic Conference of Ohio. The Catholic Conference is the official voice of the Catholic Church in Ohio on matters of public policy, and we are pleased to support House Bill 84, the Innocence Act.

Young people experience in a profound way the social ecology that binds us together. In their schools, families, and communities, children are keenly aware of the influences and consequences of their relationships. Thus, the role of law in a just society is to ensure that young people flourish in their relationships by providing them healthy models and protecting them from pedagogies of violence.

Pornography represents one of the most pernicious and violent influences among young people today. The exploitation of the vulnerable, the distortion of marital intimacy, the fetishization of cruelty, the commodification of love; to say nothing of violence against women, the terrible isolation of compulsion, and the brutalization of a young man or woman's conscience and capacity to see the dignity of the other; pornography deploys all these in its construction, as Pope Francis has said, of a "delusional parallel reality that ignores human dignity." Ohio's families can no longer tolerate a laissez-faire attitude toward this epidemic among our children.

Additionally, we urge your support for the Innocence Act for its protections regarding non-consensual distribution of sexual images. Exploiting or modifying an image to create pornographic material is a grave offense against the dignity of the human person.

The research on pornography is clear and unanimous: its effects are gravely injurious to young people. Not only will the Innocence Act treat minors online as it does in person, but this bill also responds to one of the most pressing needs of our time. Namely, the protection and elevation of human dignity. The Catholic Conference urges a swift passage for the Innocence Act.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony. I am happy to answer your questions.