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Proponent Testimony -- Senate Bill 393
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Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for Senate Bill 393 which would add prohibitions against artificially generated child sexual abuse material and enhance penalties for the worst offenders.

Technology is advancing at a rapid rate, and the Ohio Revised Code is swiftly falling behind. Senate Bill 393 is critical because it directly addresses the growing proliferation of obscene, artificially generated images that currently fall outside the reach of Ohio law.

Under existing law, it is deeply troubling that a child predator may transpose a real child's face onto a nude body. From there, the offender can generate any number of explicit images modified to satisfy their own depravities.

I have had conversations with parents whose children have fallen victim to this exact scenario. I have heard the panic, desperation, and confusion in their voice when I tell them the offender cannot be held accountable under current Ohio law.

In prosecuting child sexual abuse material cases, defendants increasingly attempt to evade accountability by claiming that the material is "not real." But these artificially generated images are no less obscene. They erode the most basic community standards of decency—standards that unequivocally reject the sexual exploitation of children. A society that tolerates such material, whether AI-generated or real, cannot be accepted.

Senate Bill 393 also strengthens protections for children through enhanced sentencing provisions. The bill includes mandatory prison terms for offenders who possess material depicting children under the age of thirteen or minors subjected acts of violence. Despite the egregious nature of these offenses, it is not uncommon for offenders to receive community control sanctions, allowing them to remain in the community and potentially reoffend

In one notable case, an individual was apprehended after attempting to meet with an undercover agent posing as a minor for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity. Following the arrest, investigators discovered nearly two hundred files depicting prepubescent children in states of nudity or engaged in sexual acts with adults. Despite this, the court granted the offender community control.

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Within a year, the individual was arrested again—this time in possession of additional child sexual abuse material and actively communicating with minors online in an effort to obtain more.

Senate Bill 393 is a necessary response to a rapidly evolving threat. The law must be clear that exploiting children, in any form, will not be tolerated and will not go unpunished. We cannot allow offenders to hide behind advancing technology while victims are left without recourse. I urge this committee to take decisive action to close this gap in the law, hold offenders accountable, and ensure that Ohio's legal framework reflects both the seriousness of these crimes and our unwavering commitment to protecting children.

On behalf of Ohio Internet Crimes Against Children, I want to thank Senator Timken and Senator Manning for taking on this issue to protect children.

I would be happy to answer any questions.