



ENOUGH·IS·ENOUGHSM

Making the Internet Safer for Children and Families

Written Testimony Regarding House Bill 180

**To: Ohio House Health Committee
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Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 180 which declares that pornography is a public health hazard. The Internet opens its users to a world that is reflective of contemporary human life, providing access to what is good, beneficial, and beautiful, but when unrestricted, it opens doors to what is ugly, depraved, dangerous, and criminal. The continuous invasion of graphic, hard-core online pornography into cultures worldwide has been called the “largest unregulated social experiment in human history”ⁱ and represents a hidden public health hazard we should not ignore.ⁱⁱ

For almost twenty years, children have been spoon-fed a steady diet of hard-core pornography via the Internet, with few laws or barriers to entry. Any child with open Internet access is just a click away from viewing, either intentionally or accidentally, sexually exploitive material, ranging from adult pornography (the kind of images that appear in Playboy and Penthouse) to prosecutable obscenity depicting graphic sex acts, live sex shows, orgies, excretory functions, bestiality, and violence. Even material depicting the actual sexual abuse of a child (child pornography)—once only found on the black market—is accessible on the Internet. This toxic material directly impacts our children’s health and mental, emotional, and sexual development. It has become one of the greatest global threats to children, marriages, families, and nations. No one is immune.

Research shows kids under the age of 10 now account for 22% of online porn consumption of minor consumersⁱⁱⁱ, and account for 1 in 10 visitors to porn video sites^{iv}, which hosts deviant and violent content. According to the CDC, youth who look at violent X-rated material are 6 times more likely^v to report forcing sex online or in-person.

Exposing minors to pornography is child sex abuse. As Internet pornography has proliferated, clinicians, psychologists, and law enforcement officials have noted an increase in the number of children seeking clinical help for issues relating to sexual exploitation, the number of children “acting out” sexually, the number of incidences of child-on-child sex attacks, and the number of incidences of child-produced child pornography.

Impact on the Emotional and Mental Development of Children

Research shows pornography short-circuits and distorts the normal personality development process and supplies misinformation about a child’s sexuality, sense of self, and body that leaves the child confused, changed, and damaged. Pornography often introduces children prematurely to sexual sensations with which they are developmentally unprepared to deal.^{vi}

Impact on Attitudes, Values, and Behavior Unfortunately, powerful lies portrayed in exploitive pornography can take the lead in educating children on very important life issues.

Pornography teaches sex without love, intimacy, tender touch, responsibility, and commitment. Teenagers also express having great difficulty bridging the gap between the porn–experience and their real–world sexual experience. The demand for today’s pre–teen girls to be “porn ready” and provide porn sex when dating is daunting.

Impact on the Brain: According to Dr. W. Dean Belnap, a pediatrician and child psychiatrist, there is a critical period when a child’s brain is being programmed for sexual orientation. It is during this period that the mind appears to be developing a “hardwire” for what the person will be aroused by or attracted to. Exposure to healthy sexual norms and attitudes during this critical period can result in the child developing a healthy sexual orientation. In contrast, if there is exposure to pornography during this period, thoughts of sexual deviance may become imprinted on the child’s “hard drive” and become a permanent part of his or her sexual orientation.^{vii} A study by German researchers published in *JAMA Psychiatry* concluded heavy porn consumers had a weaker connection between the striatum and the prefrontal cortex, an area of the brain associated with decision-making.^{viii}

Addiction/Compulsive Habituation: In her report before Congress, Dr. Jill Manning noted studies showing that when a child or adolescent encounters Internet pornography, it can have lasting negative or even traumatic effects on the child’s sense of security and sexuality; that it promotes the belief that superior sexual satisfaction is attainable without having affection for one’s partner, thereby reinforcing the commoditization of sex and the objectification of humans; and that children who have been exposed to online pornography have an increased risk for developing sexual compulsions and addictive behavior.^{ix}

Sexting In a hyper–sexualized world, it should come as no surprise that kids feel pressured to send provocative pictures and videos (“sext” messages), and to engage in sexual acts that they are not ready to handle emotionally, physically, or psychologically. One in seven teens report that they are sending sexts, and one in four are receiving sexts, according to a study of more than 110,000 teens from around the world.^x

Youth Acting Out Sexually or Assaulting Other Youth Current research suggest that exposure to pornography can prompt kids to act out sexually against younger, smaller, and more vulnerable children.^{xi} The average age of first perpetration of sexual violence is 15-16 and is associated with exposure to pornography.^{xii} These fueling factors surely contribute to pervasive sexual violence on campus - 11.2% of all students^{xiii} experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation among all graduate and undergraduate students.

Sex Trafficking As many as 21,000 underage children in the U.S. are part of the national sex trade, according to a 2016 study funded by the Justice Department.^{xiv} The sad reality is that Internet pornography, particularly that of an extreme and violent nature, fuels the demand for sex slaves. The collective billions of clicks to porn content to make money by selling videos of their sex slaves to porn sites.^{xv}

After having sacrificed almost two generations of children to the destructive harms of Internet pornography, it is time we collectively say “enough is enough!” We must educate parents, families, therapeutic practitioners, educators, clergy, corporate leaders, government leaders, and law enforcement about the devastating social consequences of pornography’s ubiquity in the Internet age. The passing of State Resolutions such as HR 180 declaring pornography a public health crisis is one way to address this crisis head on.

Shared responsibilities between the public, Corporate America, and the legal community offers a three-pronged preventative approach to create and sustain a safe, entertaining, and informative Internet environment in which children are protected from sexual predators and intrusive pornography.^{xvi} This strategy of a shared responsibility has been adopted by many national leaders worldwide; however, the strategy only works if each sector is actively performing its role. Protecting our children online and offline from sexual exploitation should be at the top of our list of national priorities.

In June of 2019, Governor McMaster of South Carolina signed the first ever “Children’s Internet Safety Governor’s Pledge”,^{xvii} which includes a call on governors to examine the harmful public health impact of Internet pornography on youth and the interconnection of sex trafficking, child pornography and Internet crimes against children. The Pledge commitments are being circulated by Gov. McMaster to the governors of all fifty states and U.S. territories.

Attorney General Alan Wilson (S.C.) and Attorney General Racine of Washington D.C. are spearheading a similar bi partisan effort among state Attorneys General. The Attorneys General Pledge has been signed by a total of six U.S. Attorneys General. Both pledges are modeled after the historic bipartisan “Children’s Internet Safety Presidential Pledge”,^{xviii} authored by Enough is Enough and signed by candidate Donald Trump and endorsed by candidate Hillary Clinton during the 2016 presidential campaign, in which both candidates promised aggressively enforce federal obscenity, child pornography, sexual predation, and sex trafficking laws, and to advance public policies designed to prevent the sexual exploitation of children online if elected president.

I am hopeful the great state of Ohio will continue this momentum and vote to pass H.R. 180, shining a much needed light on the irrefutable harms pornography presents to the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of its residents and to our nation.

ⁱ Michael Seto, conversation at the first meeting of the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children’s (ICMEC) Gloram Health Coalition, Zurich, Switzerland, October 10, 2012. Seto is Director of Forensic Rehabilitation Research, Royal Ottawa Health Care Group and a member of ICMEC

ⁱⁱ Donna Rice Hughes. The Internet Pornography Pandemic: “The Largest Unregulated Social Experiment in Human History.” Christian Apologetics Journal. 12:1 (Spring 2014). Much of this document was excerpted in part or in whole from this article.

ⁱⁱⁱ “One in 10 visitors of porn sites is under 10 years old” (Sept. 20, 2016).
<https://hotforsecurity.bitdefender.com/blog/one-in-10-visitors-of-porn-sites-is-under-10-years-old-16675.html>

iv .ibid

v Center for Innovative Public Health Research. “Violent Pornography Linked to Sexually Aggressive Behavior in Children and Adolescents” November 18, 2010.

vi EIE, “Internet Safety 101DVD Teaching Series and Workbook/Resource Guide,”

vii “Internet Safety 101” Workbook, 42–43; “Internet Safety 101” DVD Pornography 101 Section.

viii JAMA Psychiatry. “Brain Structure and Functional Connectivity Associated With Pornography Consumption: The Brain on Porn.” Simone Kühn, PhD¹; Jürgen Gallinat, PhD (July 2014).

ix Jill Manning, “Pornography’s Impact on Marriage & The Family,” <http://www.heritage.org/research/testimony/pornographys-impact-on-marriage-amp-the-family> (accessed June 6, 2014).

x JAMA Pediatrics. “Prevalence of Multiple Forms of Sexting Behavior Among Youth. A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis.” Sheri Madigan, PhD; Anh Ly, Christina L. Rash, et al. (April 2018)

xi See Olsen, “Natural Rewards, Neuroplasticity, and Non-Drug Additions”; Hilton, “Pornography addiction—a supernatural stimulus considered in the context of neuroplasticity”; John A. Hunter, Aurelio Jose Figueredo, Neil M. Malamuth, “Developmental pathways into social and sexual deviance,” in *Journal of Family Violence*, 25 (September 2009): 141–148. See also a 2010 study conducted by the Internet Solutions for Kids and funded by the Centers for Disease Control Prevention, which finds viewing violent x-rated material may contribute to sexually aggressive behavior among 10–17 year olds. <http://is4k.com/press-releases/violent-pornography-linked-to-sexually-aggressive-behavior-in-children-and-adolescents/>.

xii Prevention Science. “Predicting the Emergence of Sexual Violence in Adolescence.” Michele L. Ybarra, Richard Thompson. (May 2018).

xiii <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence> (accessed 9-13-2019).

xiv Department of Justice, “Youth Involvement in the Sex Trade: A National Study.” Rachel Swaner, Melissa Labriola, Michael Rempel, Allyson Walker, and Joseph Spadafore. (March 2016). <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/grants/249952.pdf?ed2f26df2d9c416fbddddd2330a778c6=jaccjsvskj-jdvsadwa>

xv <https://fightthenewdrug.org/media/how-porn-fuels-sex-trafficking-video/> (accessed 9-13-2019).

xvi <https://enough.org/aboutus>. Enough Is Enough 3-pronged preventative approach.” Accessed 9-13-19.

xvii EIE, “Children’s Internet Safety Governor’s Pledge.” https://enough.org/governor_safety_pledge (accessed 9/13/2019).

xviii https://enough.org/presidential_pledge (accessed 9-13-2019).