



# JOY GOEBEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 5<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## Assembly Committee on State Affairs Testimony on AB 105 March 12, 2025

Good Morning Chairman Swearingen and members of the Assembly Committee on State Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 105 (AB 105).

Assembly Bill 105 provides a responsible, thoughtful approach to safeguarding minors from harmful online content by requiring a reasonable age-verification method to access adult content online. I think we can all agree the internet offers incredible opportunities for education, connection, and innovation. However, it also presents serious risks—especially for children—who can be inadvertently exposed to explicit material that no parent would want them to access.

In the last two decades, we have seen the consumption of online pornography explode to such a level it is now considered a public health crisis. With the advent of the internet becoming integral to our every day lives, it also brought with it a level of danger for minors. Porn is no longer a dirty magazine found under a mattress. It's pervasive, hardcore, and easily accessible and it targets our youngest generation to hook them early and keep them addicted.

A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association examined brain structure and functional connectivity and found an adverse effect with pornography consumption. According to the study, pornography consumption in adult males led to an increased risk for internet sex addiction, alcohol use disorder, and depression. Given the complexities of brain development in adolescence, pornography is another risk factor for youth in battling mental health challenges.

Wisconsin is not alone in recognizing the urgency of this issue. In recent years, 19 states have passed similar legislation aimed at ensuring online spaces are safer for minors. Louisiana led the way in 2022 by becoming the first state to require government-issued identification for access to adult content. Many of the concepts before you today are modeled on the Louisiana law.

Assembly Bill 105 is structured to align with these successful policies, incorporating key provisions that have been implemented in other states:

- **Mandatory Age Verification** – Businesses hosting substantial amounts of content harmful to minors must implement a reasonable verification method to ensure users are at least 18 years old.
- **Privacy Protection** – Websites and third-party verifiers are prohibited from retaining any personal data after verifying a user's age.
- **Prohibition of Obscene Material** – The bill strengthens existing laws by ensuring explicit and harmful content is not easily accessible to minors.
- **Clear Legal Enforcement** – Businesses failing to comply could face civil liability, allowing individuals or entities to seek damages and legal recourse.



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This legislation does not infringe on free speech or impose an undue burden on consumers—it simply places responsibility on businesses that distribute explicit content to ensure minors are not exposed.

Wisconsin now has an opportunity to join the growing list of states taking meaningful action to protect children online. I urge the Committee to advance this legislation, ensuring that Wisconsin families can have greater peace of mind in an increasingly digital world.



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### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 105 ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON STATE AFFAIRS WEDNESDAY, MARCH, 12, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Swearingen and committee members, for the opportunity to testify on Assembly Bill 105. I am Sam Krebs, Legislative and Policy Director for Wisconsin Family Action. Wisconsin Family Action supports Assembly Bill 105 requiring adult content websites to age verify their visitors.

I would like to note this bill has received strong bipartisan support in the past, and we hope that this committee will also see the value in moving forward this common-sense legislation which will be greatly beneficial to families.

I want to touch on three specific items relating to Assembly 105. These items include the harms of pornography especially for young people, the aspect of data privacy relating to this particular bill, and finally the legal status of similar legislation which has been enacted in approximately 20 states so far.

First, the harms of pornography have been linked to mental health problems as well as sexual violence. Shockingly, or maybe not so shockingly in our digital society, the majority of kids have been exposed to porn by age 13.<sup>1</sup> Fast forward to just before the age of 18, and 93% of boys and 63% of girls report being exposed to internet pornography.

Exposure at such a young age has severe consequences.

Society at times seems oblivious that kids are viewing porn and rationalize that if they are seeing porn, it's not that big a deal. Sadly, we couldn't be more wrong about this silent epidemic. The pornography children regularly view right now is increasingly graphic, violent, and extreme. One study found that 88% of scenes in popular pornography videos involved physical aggression and 49% contained verbal aggression.<sup>2</sup>

Heidi Olson, a Certified Pediatric Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) who has reviewed thousands of pediatric sexual assault cases, says, "Research and anecdotal evidence show that many kids with problematic sexual behavior have been viewing online pornography."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fight the New Drug. "What's the Average Age of a Child's First Exposure to Porn?" May 23, 2023. <https://fightthenewdrug.org/real-average-age-of-first-exposure/>

<sup>2</sup>Bridges AJ, Wosnitzer R, Scharrer E, Sun C, Liberman R. Aggression and sexual behavior in best-selling pornography videos: a content analysis update. *Violence Against Women*. 2010 Oct;16(10):1065-85. doi: 10.1177/1077801210382866. PMID: 20980228. <http://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20980228/>

<sup>3</sup> Culture Reframed. "The Influence of Pornography on Child Sexual Assault." January 15, 2024. <https://culturereframed.org/the-influence-of-pornography-on-child-sexual-assault/>

In addition, regular consumption of online pornography has been associated with a higher likelihood of negative mental health effects in young adults. Research indicates that nearly one in three young adults (32%) who view pornography daily report frequent feelings of sadness, depression, or hopelessness, whereas only 19% of those who seldom or never engage with pornography report experiencing these emotions.<sup>4</sup>

While I can continue to cite statistics to you about how pornography is detrimental to mental health, I wanted to share a personal story of Rachel Robison. In her preteens, Rachel was diagnosed with anxiety and depression. She also struggled with an eating disorder starting from the age of 12 and lasting until she was 20. Rachel says, "The mental health issues I was facing were rooted directly in my pornography addiction. Porn stole my innocence and polluted my mind, creating a dark reality that almost took my life."<sup>5</sup> I encourage you all to read more about Rachel's journey as her story is far too symbolic of the many battles our kids with pornography addictions face today.

Second, I would like to talk about the technological aspects of this bill and its relation to data privacy.

Age verification in a digital space is a growing industry, and technology is catching up to the need this is presenting in our current world. The Legislature must grapple with the fact that we have age verification in the physical world, and this age verification must be extended to the digital world. From rental cars, to banking and cryptocurrency, to pharmaceutical products, and more, age verification is necessary for all kinds of products and services.

Examples of companies providing online age verification services include:

- Yoti, which currently partners with Instagram, estimates the age of the user based on facial features through a video selfie which is deleted upon confirmation of age. Yoti has a roughly 99 percent positive rate for correct estimations.<sup>6</sup>
- FaceTec uses biometrics through face identification in a short video to perform age or ID verification creating a 3D map of an individual's face with a two-second video. As an example of their confidence in accuracy, the company will pay a \$600,000 bounty to testers who fool the system. The Department of Homeland Security and several international banks are among its users.<sup>7</sup>
- InCode is another company which provides age verification services boasting a three second average verification time from start to finish, 99% accuracy when identifying minors (ages 6-17), and the ability to verify age without storing personal information returning age check results (over/under a threshold) while still meeting auditing requirements.

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<sup>4</sup> Wang, Wendy and Michael Toscano. "Frequent Porn Use Is Linked to Negative Mental Health Among Gen-Z and Millennials." Institute for Family Studies. <https://ifstudies.org/blog/frequent-porn-use-is-linked-to-negative-mental-health-among-gen-z-and-millennials>

<sup>5</sup> Kamman, Samantha. "'Porn Stole My Innocence': How Pornography Exposure Conditioned Abuse, Self-Harm of Teenage Girl." The Christian Post, January 21, 2025. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/how-porn-conditioned-abuse-self-harm-in-mind-of-teenage-girl.html>

<sup>6</sup> "Yoti Age Estimation," Yoti, May 2022, <https://www.yoti.com/wp-content/uploads/Yoti-Age-Estimation-White-Paper-Executive-Summary-May-2022.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> "Clients and Partners," FaceTec, <https://www.facetec.com/#page-blk-clients-and-partners>

Wisconsin Family Action recognizes that data deletion is crucial for maintaining privacy while also discouraging bad actors. That is why this bill mandates that those conduct the age verification will not retain any identifying information of individuals being vetted.

Finally, I'd like to address concerns some may raise about the constitutionality of age-verification requirements. The federal Supreme Court has determined on multiple occasions that the government has a compelling interest to protect children from obscene content including in cases such as *Ginsberg v. New York*.

As technology has evolved, new opportunities to enable such protection has emerged. You may be well aware there is a currently case before the federal Supreme Court (*Free Speech Coalition v. Paxton*) in which big porn companies are challenging age verification laws. In the course of oral arguments, members of the Court noted that the current legal structure of filtering and blocking programs has significant shortcomings, observed the progress made in technologies that verify age, and affirmed the government's responsibility to shield minors from indecent content.

We are confident that the Court will find in favor of the age verification law.

Wisconsin Family Action believes the Legislature has an interest in preventing minors from being exposed to explicit and often violent material which can harm their mental health, distort their understanding of relationships, and increase the risk of developing damaging, addictive behaviors.

**Enacting age verification measures through Assembly Bill 105 is a common-sense, legally sound approach to shielding minors from the well-documented dangers of pornography.**

Thank you for your attention and thoughtful consideration on this proposal.

Thank you, Chairman Swearingen and committee members, for the opportunity to testify on Assembly Bill 105. I am Pastor John Tilstra. I pastor Bethel Reformed Church in Brandon, Wisconsin. I encourage you to support AB 105.

From time to time, I have spoken to the congregation about the dangers of sexual sin. All sexual sin is a product of lust. All sexual sin is a violation of God's holy and righteous character and law. He created sex and decreed that sex and sexual desire are to be the exclusive domain of marriage between one man and one woman for life. In the Old Testament book, the Song of Solomon, King Solomon speaks of the pleasure of sexual intimacy between a husband and a wife. We can and should praise God for the gift of sexual intimacy as God intended it to be in marriage. In short, sex is what bonds a man and woman together.

Marriage is based on the triunity of God. When you see a Christian marriage, you are seeing a reflection of the relationship that the three persons of the Trinity enjoy.

With the entrance of sin in the world, God's magnificent plan of monogamous, sexual union became distorted. Lust and the desire to control and use others in relationships now pervade human relationships, because men and women now see themselves as God—they believe they are free to do anything that satisfies them at the expense of others. Pornography falls into this category.

So, how are we to navigate this dilemma? Since, we are discussing limiting a child's access to pornography via the internet, we must understand why this is so crucial.

First, lust starts in the heart, fueled by the eyes. In 1 John 1:15-16, the apostle John states, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father, but from the world."

Youth and children are naturally curious. As they grow towards adulthood, they discover the opposite sex. If they are not guided by parents and the church concerning their budding sexual desires, children and youth will find ways to satisfy their curiosity. With the rise of the internet, and the ease at which pornography can be accessed, that curiosity can be satisfied, all be it, in a distorted and damning way. Pornography distorts God's design of intimacy and oneness.

Pornography lures children into its trap, feeds their curiosity, then leaves them with images that cannot be erased from their mind. Others today may discuss the neurological aspects of pornography, but these images "hook" the child, pulling them back to look again, and what they see shapes their desires. This is how an addiction to pornography begins.

Second, lust in the form of pornography confuses and overwhelms children. Their brains, not being developed enough to understand what they are seeing, cannot process its explicit nature, nor can they make sense of the complex themes and messages. They will also see sex portrayed as violent and that any combination of people, sexes, and ages can be involved. This will cause them great stress, and the exposure can be traumatic.<sup>1</sup>

Third, pornography will normalize unhealthy, unrealistic and often violent attitudes and behaviors toward sex, relationships, and women.<sup>2</sup> This will negatively impact children's future relationships, as well. Serial killer Ted Bundy admits that his exposure and addiction to pornography fueled his desire to kill others.

Fourth, children who are exposed to pornography may be more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and grooming.<sup>3</sup> They may be more likely to engage in risky behavior like sexting, or taking pictures of their nakedness, sending them to someone they thought was their friend, but instead, discovered that the consequences of their action created a serious problem for themselves. These supposed friends had evil intent. They are, as Christ said, "wolves in sheep's clothing."

I could go on, but the bottom line is this: what children see affects them. When they view pornographic material, their entire being is negatively affected. Pornography poisons the mind and sickens the soul.

While it is ultimately parents who are responsible for what their children are seeing and doing, both the church and the State of Wisconsin can come alongside our parents and help them in this daunting task of protecting their children from the scourge of pornography.

We verify ages for alcohol and tobacco, because we know they can be harmful for minors. We ought to do the same for pornography.

I exhort both parties in our state legislature to come together and do what is right for the children and families of the State of Wisconsin. This bill is nonpartisan. I urge you to show our state and our nation that Democrats and Republicans can come together to protect Wisconsin's children from the dangers of pornography.

"Thank you again Chairman Swearingen and the committee for having a hearing on AB 105 and hearing my testimony. I'm grateful for your service to the people of Wisconsin. I am available for questions."

<sup>1, 2, and 3</sup> Strickland, Darby. "Shepherding Children through Exposure to Pornography." *The Aquilla Report*, CCEF.org, August 2023.



March 12, 2025

Chair Swearingen, Vice-Chair Green, and Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on State Affairs:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to Assembly Bill 105.

Put simply, AB-105 raises significant concerns around privacy, surveillance, and the First Amendment. While the ACLU of Wisconsin is sympathetic to the overarching goal of this legislation, we do not believe an appropriate trade-off is compromising the civil liberties of all Wisconsinites.

AB-105 proposes to “card” all people who access websites with content deemed “material harmful to minors.” Under the bill, age verification could be conducted by checking a website-user’s government-issued identification card or “by using any commercially reasonable method that uses public or private transactional data gathered about the individual.”

The language in AB-105 bears a striking resemblance to a law passed in Texas<sup>1</sup> that has been challenged in federal court on First Amendment grounds.<sup>2</sup> A similar age-verification law aimed at social-media platforms passed in Arkansas was enjoined following a lawsuit challenging the law’s constitutionality.<sup>3</sup> In enjoining each of these laws, federal courts in Texas and Arkansas found that the laws unconstitutionally discriminated against protected speech and impermissibly placed speech behind age verification requirements for both minors and adults.<sup>4</sup> The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals vacated the injunction regarding the age verification portion of the Texas law and affirmed the injunction as to a different portion of the Texas statute,<sup>5</sup> and the U.S. Supreme Court granted a petition for a writ of certiorari and heard oral argument in January 2025 on the issue of whether the Fifth Circuit erred as a matter of law in applying rational-basis review, instead of strict scrutiny, to a law burdening adults’ access to protected speech.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Texas H.B. 1181, <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/88R/billtext/html/HB01181H.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> *Free Speech Coalition, Inc. v. Colmenero*, 689 F.Supp.3d 373 (W.D. Tex. Aug. 31, 2023).

<sup>3</sup> *NetChoice, LLC v. Griffin*, No. 5:23-CV-05105, 2023 WL 5660155 (W.D. Ark. Aug. 31, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> The two decisions followed long-established protections for speech online. Social media’s primary purpose is to allow users to speak, and “to foreclose access to social media altogether is to prevent the user from engaging in the legitimate exercise of First Amendment rights.” *Packingham v. North Carolina*, 582 U.S. 98, 108 (2017). The Supreme Court has been adamant that children “are entitled to a significant measure of First Amendment protection, and only in relatively narrow and well-defined circumstances may government bar public dissemination of protected materials to them.” *Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Ass’n*, 564 U.S. 786, 794-95 (2011); accord *Tinker v. Des Moines Ind. Comm. School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969). Thus, broad bars to accessing speech online based on age are likely unconstitutional.

<sup>5</sup> *Free Speech Coalition, Inc. v. Paxton*, 95 F.4th 263 (5th Cir. 2024).

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/free-speech-coalition-inc-v-paxton/>



The two decisions further recognize that the laws' preferred regulation of speech online—age verification—places impermissible barriers between adult and minor users and the right to speech by undermining their privacy. The Arkansas court recognized that age verification requires adults and minors to surrender their anonymity.<sup>7</sup> The Texas District Court expressly concluded that the evidence showed that age verification technology remains intrusive of privacy, despite purported advances in the technology.<sup>8</sup> Even requirements in the law that data not be retained or used for other purposes did not alleviate the chilling effect from loss of anonymity.<sup>9</sup>

Common age verification methods include uploading a driver's license or state ID, facial recognition technology, or private transactional data such as a credit card. These requirements could "serve as a complete block to adults who wish to access [online] material but do not" have the necessary form of identification.<sup>10</sup> Under AB-105, that could include Wisconsinites who do not have a driver's license or other government-issued form of identification or a credit card.

While AB-105 includes a provision that entities conducting age verification may not "retain" users' "identifying information," the bill does not prohibit transfer of that information to third party entities—including private data broker companies or the government, creating the risk of state monitoring of what kind of websites individuals visit.

For example, the issue of storage and access could be illustrated by the difference between showing an ID at a bar and uploading an ID to a website online. At a bar, the bouncer takes a quick look at the ID to verify the age without storing or holding this sensitive information. Uploading an ID to a website carries far greater privacy risks, and the fear of the consequences of data misuse from uploading an ID to a website without knowledge is enough to scare many users away from accessing this content.

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<sup>7</sup> "Requiring adult users to produce state-approved documentation to prove their age and/or submit to biometric age-verification testing imposes significant burdens on adult access to constitutionally protected speech and 'discourage[s] users from accessing [the regulated] sites.' *Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union*, 521 U.S. 844, 856 (1997). Age-verification schemes like those contemplated by Act 689 'are not only an additional hassle,' but 'they also require that website visitors forgo the anonymity otherwise available on the internet.' *Am. Booksellers Found. v. Dean*, 342 F.3d 96, 99 (2d Cir. 2003); see also *ACLU v. Mukasey*, 534 F.3d 181, 197 (3d Cir. 2008) (finding age-verification requirements force users to 'relinquish their anonymity to access protected speech')."

<sup>8</sup> "First, the restriction is constitutionally problematic because it deters adults' access to legal sexually explicit material, far beyond the interest of protecting minors...People may fear to transmit their personal information, and may also fear that their personal, identifying information will be collected and stored in the records of various Web sites or providers of adult identification numbers... [the] Supreme Court has disapproved of content-based restrictions that require recipients to identify themselves affirmatively before being granted access to disfavored speech."

<sup>9</sup> The Texas court said, "Defendant contests this, arguing that the chilling effect will be limited by age verification's ease and deletion of information. This argument, however, assumes that consumers will (1) know that their data is required to be deleted and (2) trust that companies will actually delete it. Both premises are dubious, and so the speech will be chilled whether or not the deletion occurs. In short, it is the deterrence that creates the injury, not the actual retention."

<sup>10</sup> *PSINet, Inc. v. Champan*, 362 F.3d 227, 237 (4th Cir. 2004); see also *Am. Booksellers Found.*, 342 F.3d at 99 (invalidating age verification requirement that would make "adults who do not have [the necessary form of identification] . . . unable to access those sites").

Determining who is a minor requires collecting sensitive information from all users—information that can then be stolen and exploited even years later.<sup>11</sup> As the court noted in *ACLU v. Gonzales*, age verification deters “many users who are not willing to access information non-anonymously...from accessing the desired information.”<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, by forcing adults to identify themselves in this manner to access lawful, fully protected content online that may fall under the bill’s definition of “material harmful to minors,” AB-105 imposes an unconstitutional burden on adult access to protected speech. The bill’s age verification requirement will likewise burden users who do not have government identification, who wish to exercise their First Amendment right to anonymity or who are otherwise concerned about privacy and security, or whose age or identity “commercially reasonable method[s]” will fail to accurately gauge.

While the bill’s aims are geared toward protecting minors from harmful content, AB-105 exempts the search engines that are principal gateways for minors’ access to that very content. Further, website-based age verification does not address the myriad ways internet uses can circumvent verification or lead to children accessing less regulated websites.

Notably, the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children filed an amicus brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in support of the challenge to the Texas age verification law. Their argument as to why the law would not achieve legislators’ aims was three-fold:

*First, it will be ineffective. Under H.B. 1181, where more than a third of a website’s content comprises “sexual material harmful to minors,” the website must implement age verification. When implemented at the website or platform level, however, age-verification systems can be avoided easily by using widely available Virtual Private Networks (“VPNs”) or private browsers, like The Onion Router (“Tor”) network. Second, meaningful enforcement of H.B. 1181 is impractical because the law cannot be enforced extraterritorially, where many websites hosting content harmful to minors are located. Third, in light of those practical realities, H.B. 1181 will cause unintended harm. Both the Tor network and offshore websites expose minors to separate risks, such as malware, trafficking, and predation. In effect, H.B. 1181’s age-verification requirement could steer minors to more harmful corners of the internet where no such access limitation exists.<sup>13</sup>*

Courts have invalidated age verification laws, in large part because of the significant burden verification imposes on all users and the availability of less-restrictive alternatives such as policies enabling or encouraging users (or their parents) to control their own access to information, such as content-filtering device-specific software which limits minors’ access to sexual material inappropriate for them without burdening adults’ access to speech they have a right to receive. We can make the internet safer without sacrificing the privacy and constitutional rights of all Wisconsinites.

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<sup>11</sup> Matt Perault, J. Scott Babwah Brennan, “To Protect Kids Online, Policymakers Must First Determine Who is a Kid,” Tech Policy Press (July 5, 2023), <https://www.techpolicy.press/to-protect-kids-online-policymakers-must-first-determine-who-is-a-kid/>.

<sup>12</sup> *ACLU v. Gonzales*, 478 F. Supp. 2d 775 (E.D. Pa. 2007).

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/23/23-1122/309948/20240516145744135\\_Amicus%20Brief%20--%20Free%20Speech%20Coalition%20v.%20Paxton.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/23/23-1122/309948/20240516145744135_Amicus%20Brief%20--%20Free%20Speech%20Coalition%20v.%20Paxton.pdf)

# State of Wisconsin Public Hearing on Bill AB 105 Assembly Committee on State Affairs

Subject: Limiting Pornography for Minors

Testifying: Pastor John Slotten

Introduction:

Dear Committee Chair and Members,

Thank you for holding this hearing and allowing my testimony. I'm Pastor John Slotten. I have a deep desire to join you in making an impact to develop policy and serious decency laws for protecting all children.

In perhaps a unique way that's rarely shared on this issue is the view from a Pastor in the crisis and care of this issue. I have helped many families and their children and later many individuals who became adults. Most can't imagine the help needed to deal with the harmful repercussions of pornography exposures, addictions, and their affects. As a Pastor for nearly 35yrs having served in one of the largest denominations and later invited to serve one of the largest Evangelical churches in Northeast Wisconsin and then enjoyed ending my full time career starting and leading their Fond du lac campus. In my ministry years sadly Pornography has become such a huge issue I had to start addressing it in front of the church, with youth groups, in youth and adult jail ministry, discussed it with other clergy, and spoke at many conferences. Today I testify before you. Thank you in advance.

I stand before you today believing every adult and lawmaker should protect children from pornography because every adult here knows the depravity it causes.

1.) My exposure as a youth:

- While mowing the lawn: Photographs - Sadly all those years ago in situations like this I still have those images burned in my mind.
- Do you remember your first exposure and its details (Sadly Most Do).

2.) Unhindered Access for any age:

Not one decent person here would expose their child or any child to pornography.  
No decent grandparent would expose their grand children to pornography.  
If anyone did they would be arrested, charged, and jailed.

Yet owners and employees in the porn industry currently have no or little accountability or repercussions. Children can get into porn by a click of a finger on their phone, another's phone, or any computer. Plus without looking anyone including children can get pop up's!  
In my generation when we were kids, you needed a I.D. to get into a XXX theater, or same for a store clerk for a magazine or book store.

Grooming and tempting pop ups: At my wife school with safeware in place a teen typed in the computer "Teen Jobs" the student grabbed my wife and both were polluted by unwanted and unsought porn. My wife took it to administration who were shocked it got through.

Since it is illegal for adults to expose children to pornography therefore children should not have access on their own.

### 3.) Porn Facts:

Pastor Dave Lehman and I poled about 150 male students in the church youth group several years ago (with parental knowledge). Over 80% admitted to seeing porn. Over 50% within the last week.

In a 2024 Pediatrics report over 80% of youth are exposed to porn before they're 17 and most 54% boys and 34% girls had a first experience by the age of 13. Additionally, 15% prior to 11 years old Thirty-nine percent of boys and 23% of girls have seen scenes of sexual bondage online and 15% of boys and 9% of girls have seen images of child pornography online.

Porn industry growth is targeting female children and women is fast paced

### 4.) Exposure Damage:

It can cause ongoing issues:

It can be done in private with no sure fire security working to prevent children nor hold others accountable if they do.

Leads many young people to share with others.

unregulated excess and exposure to pornography during the formative years of adolescence has been seen to have various long-term effects on sexual maturation, sexual behavior, Internet addiction, and overall personality development.

As stated it has started to exponentially impact young girls.

When exposed before the age of reason data shows others are at higher risk for reckless exposure from a previously exposed minor.

Early sexual activity

Promiscuity

Anything can be found and seen and it can give a warped view of intimacy.

Aggression, control, rough, and leads to multiple partners.

Emotional stability

Emotional Development is stunted

Phycological issues

Social & Relational issues

Marriage and intimacy issues

Addictive issues

Insecurity

Unrealistic view of opposite sex

Objectifying and sexualizing others as

pornography normalizes violence, which leads to increases in sex trafficking, prostitution, childhood sexual abuse, and child pornography. Acting out occurs and higher rates of arrest and jail time are seen in youth exposed.

Getting caught and it's family crisis is overwhelming

Family Damage needing counsel for it's shame, guilt, and sin.

#### 5.) Medical, and Addictive facts:

American College of Pediatrics states: "The availability and use of pornography has become almost ubiquitous among adults and adolescents. Consumption of pornography is associated with many negative emotional, psychological, sociological, 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, child sex abuse, sexual trafficking, 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. Because well over 80% of youth are exposed to porn before they're 17 and most (54% boys and 34% girls) had a first experience by the age of 13. Then we have the damage, depravity, and issues it causes including addiction.

Did you know a medical brain scan study has proven that in a young man's brain the euphoric stimulation that porn causes which leads leads to masturbation and climax stimulates a young man's brain neural changes in the brains from such pornography users are similar to the changes seen in brains of individuals addicted to drugs. These changes in the brain indicate pornography's powerful effects of the dopaminergic reward system of the brain. Heroin is also a powerful addiction. The human male orgasm causes the release of the natural human brain produced opioid peptides, called endogenous opioids, like endorphins and enkephalins, which bind to opioid receptors. These endogenous opioids in the human brain can mimic the same chemical reactions as a powerful Heroin drug addiction.

Everyone here tell yourself: "I must ask myself to imagine the adverse issues and affects this causes within the still young developing brain of a child

Over the past decade this report states: there has been a large increase in the pornographic material that is available to both adults and children. Mainstream pornography use has grown common because it is accessible, affordable, and anonymous. It is accessible because it is just a few keystrokes away on the Internet. It is affordable because many online sites offer free pornography to lure viewers to their web sites. It is anonymous because it can be viewed in the privacy of a person's home. There is no longer a need to visit an adult bookstore or the local XXX theatre. One of the primary uses for pornography is sexual stimulation followed by masturbation. This behavior has been shown to be highly addictive.

In 2008, the Internet and marketing firm *Hitwise* reported that globally 40,634 web sites distributed pornography. In 2019, the cyber security firm Webroot stated that 35% of all digital downloads were related to pornography. A research survey published in 2023 found that the revenue for the porn industry was \$13 billion in the United States and \$100 billion globally. The world's largest pornography site, Pornhub, claims it has 28.5 billion annual visits to its website.

#### 6.) What Porn doesn't show:

Trafficking & every form of Abuse

That it's someone daughter/son and someone's granddaughter/grandson

Break down of family

Disease

Participants addictions

Porns depravity in the actors own life

Real loving married committed intimacy

This multi-billion dollar industry is trying to purposely addict people. Trying to lure and tempt people and yes minors.

Temporary or long term impact to victims, actors, and families

7.) Did you know according to the "American Public Health Association". Its reported 17 States have named pornography as a public health crisis all since 2016.

Is Wisconsin on the list?

**Path Forward:**

a.) Aggressively make Public Policy & Decently Laws a priority to protect children!

b.) Support Bill AB 105

c.) No longer turn an eyes the other way

d.) It's time to protect our children, grandchildren and every child. It's time to hold this industry to a secure standard of protective access securing no minor can gain access. Then Empower Enforcement to follow through with all legal access at our disposal.

e.) Every adult here can & should help protect, build-up, and nurture the dignity of every child

f.) **Implement Change:** Across party lines, Porns depravity to minors can be positively impacted, delayed, protected and even stop for many with what should happen starting today by every man & woman here and serving our great state of Wisconsin.

Best Regards and Blessings,

Pastor John Slotten





## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Representative Rob Swearingen, Chair  
Members, Assembly Committee on State Affairs

FROM: David Earleywine, Associate Director

DATE: March 12, 2025

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 105, Age Verification for Pornography

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The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Wisconsin, appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in support of Assembly Bill 105.

This bill prohibits business entities from knowingly and intentionally publishing or distributing material harmful to minors on the internet without performing a reasonable age verification method to verify the age of individuals attempting to access the website. By July 1, 2025, there will be 20 states with age verification laws and another 17 will have introduced similar legislation.<sup>1</sup>

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that pornography “does grave injury to the dignity of the participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world. It is a grave offense. Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials” (CCC 2354). In other words, pornography is contrary to human dignity which causes those who view it to treat people like “objects” for personal gratification.

The average age of first exposure to pornography is 11.<sup>2</sup> That means elementary school age children are being exposed to pornography. This can be traumatizing for youth. As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops writes “Seeing it steals their innocence and gives them a distorted image of sexuality, relationships, and men and women, which may then affect their behavior. It can also make them more vulnerable to being sexually abused, since their understanding of appropriate behavior can be damaged.”<sup>3</sup>

In the last 20 years, pornography has grown increasingly affordable, accessible, and anonymous. The rise of high-speed internet made it accessible online with a few clicks. The rise of the smartphone allowed everyone to carry around porn at their fingertips at all times.

Consider these statistics regarding the rise of smartphones and pornography for children:

1. In 2022, 95% of teens owned smartphones. This included 53% of 11-year-olds.<sup>4</sup>
2. In 2021, 42% of children had a smartphone by age 10 (in 2009 only 9% had a cell phone of any kind at age 10).<sup>5</sup>
3. By October 2023, approximately 97% of traffic to Pornhub.com came from a mobile device.<sup>6</sup>
4. In 2019, the world’s top porn site had more than 1 BILLION visitors per month.<sup>7</sup> This was more visitors than Amazon, Twitter, and Netflix combined.
5. As of 2022, 73% of teens reported they had consumed pornography.<sup>8</sup>
6. In the same study, 15% of teens reported consuming pornography by age 10.



In short, these statistics show an alarming trend of pornography consumption by teens and children. Even the World Health Organization recognized this epidemic in 2022, when it included "compulsive sexual behavior"—which includes habitual pornography—to its list of impulse control disorders.

These statistics are alarming, but only tell part of the story. Viewing pornography is linked to both short-term and long-term negative outcomes. “In a literature review of four case studies and nine articles from 2000 to 2022 ... in all facets of the users lives negative consequences were seen.”<sup>9</sup>

In the short term, individuals using pornography often experience loneliness, shame, withdrawal from social events, and other negative effects. Long term, porn consumption is linked to poor mental health, sexism and objectification, sexual violence, and other negative outcomes.<sup>10</sup>

As one study states, children are the most vulnerable due to the “malleable nature of their brains” and adolescence is when “most mental health conditions and addictions develop.” Furthermore, the “academic literature makes it clear that pornography use has significant impacts on adolescent development.”<sup>11</sup>

Specifically, “pornography consumption by youth has been linked to the exacerbation of paraphilias, an increase in sexual aggression perpetration and victimization and ... an increase in online sexual victimization.”<sup>12</sup>

A 2023 study found that: exposure to pornography promoted “teen dating violence,” “victimization of females in sexually abusive relationships,” and “behavioral changes in adolescents ... including the adoption of unsafe sexual practices.” The study also found that “rapes, violent crimes, and sexual assaults” were higher in adolescents who spent greater time viewing pornography. Lastly, the study reported pornography could lead to “teen pregnancies as a result of unsafe sexual practices emulating the online content.”<sup>13</sup>

Those that emphasize the free speech rights of the pornography industry will emphasize that parents can protect their children by installing filters on their devices. Such an argument does not acknowledge that the industry has adapted to these filtering devices. Simply put, individual parents cannot compete against a sophisticated industry that uses every trick to lure in viewers. What makes online pornography so different today than in the past is that viewers don’t have to go looking for it. No matter what filters parents may put on their devices, the porn industry finds ways to ensnare children. In essence, without meaningful restrictions, children are carrying poison in their phones.

Related to this is the fact that most parents do not have the ability to properly monitor their children’s use of the internet. Most parents work, in addition to raising their families, and have limited time and knowledge to keep up with the ever-changing landscape of social platforms.

Society does not just leave it up to parents to keep their children out of strip clubs. It also obliges strip clubs to refuse admission to minors. It follows then that platforms must block minors from virtual spaces that peddle pornography. This is not a violation of free speech. Adults can still produce and consume porn. But now that porn addiction has been definitively shown to damage children, governments have a responsibility to prohibit the porn industry from targeting children. After all, we don’t allow the tobacco or alcohol industries to target children. Minors must present an ID when attempting to purchase tobacco and alcohol. The same should be required when they attempt to access online porn.

For all these reasons, we strongly urge you to support this legislation. Thank you.

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- <sup>1</sup> Free Speech Coalition, *Age Verification Bill Tracker* (2025), <https://action.freespeechcoalition.com/age-verification-bills/>.
- <sup>2</sup> Amanda Giordano et al., *Pornography Use and Sexting Trends Among American Adolescents: Data to Inform School Counseling Programming and Practice*, (Oct. 31, 2022), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2156759X221137287>.
- <sup>3</sup> USCCB, *Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography*, (2015), <https://www.usccb.org/resources/Create-in-Me-a-Clean-Heart-Statement-on-Pornography.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> *Free Speech Coalition v. Paxton: Brief of Amici Curiae from Major Religious Organizations Supporting Respondent and Affirmance*, p. 23 (Nov. 2024), [https://www.usccb.org/resources/FSCvPaxton\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.usccb.org/resources/FSCvPaxton_FINAL.pdf).
- <sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 24.
- <sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 26.
- <sup>7</sup> Hasseeb Qadri et al., *Physiological, Psychosocial and Substance Abuse Effects of Pornography Addiction: A Narrative Review*, (Jan. 12, 2023), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9922938/>.
- <sup>8</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>10</sup> UNICEF, *Protection of children from the harmful impacts of pornography*, <https://www.unicef.org/harmful-content-online>.
- <sup>11</sup> Mary Sharpe and Darryl Mead, *Problematic Pornography Use: Legal and Health Policy Considerations*, (Sept. 9, 2021), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8426110/>.
- <sup>12</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>13</sup> Surobhi Chatterjee and Sujitia Kumar Kar, *Teen Pornography: An Emerging Mental Health Challenge*, (Mar. 9 2023), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/26318318231154230>.



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**Limiting Pornography for Minors; Public Hearing on Assembly Bill 105**  
*Assembly Committee on State Affairs*

March 12, 2025

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Assembly Bill 105 regarding the distribution of certain material on the Internet, specifically, “material harmful to minors”.

I am the school administrator at Maranatha Baptist Academy in Watertown, Wisconsin, and I have worked in education and school administration for about 20 years. I have five children of my own, and I have also been blessed to work with teens and families in various ministry and church settings. I believe the issue of Internet-based material that is harmful to minors is one of the most important issues you can consider for Wisconsin families, so thank you for doing so.

I believe we agree that young people today have much easier access to harmful material than ever before. Teenagers carry the Internet in their pockets, and many constantly surf the web both in public and private. This is a much different set of circumstances than many of us experienced as teenagers. In years past, for a young person to access “material harmful to minors”, he or she would have to seek out this material on back shelves of a convenience store or purposefully visit a certain type of shop. However, this scenario has now reversed itself—“material harmful to minors” is now seeking *them* out. Owners of pornographic websites are acting *intentionally* without regard to the best interest of the user. Young people who may otherwise have had no contact with pornography are now solicited through advertisers and algorithms chasing them around the Internet.

Teenage young men are especially at risk—for example, a young man, such as my teenage son, might be shopping for basketball shoes online and within seconds be shown an advertisement for pornography. The only information he is searching for is “guys basketball shoes in size 10”, and yet the pornography industry will work unceasingly to make him discover something else—something highly addictive and highly damaging to his present and his future. Pornography does not care whose thinking it damages, which marriages it destroys, or how many

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victims it creates. Should not the adults of a society who understand the dangers of pornography do all we can to end access to this addictive material, especially for the most vulnerable?

As you think deeply about restricting “material harmful to minors” on the Internet, I would ask you to consider why the pornography industry takes in an estimated \$100 billion per year. Is it because this industry sells a product that makes people’s lives better? Is it because the content in this industry builds up families and helps young people think more wisely about marriage, family, and sexuality? Or is it because this industry hinges on *addiction*—enticing users with the false promise of satisfaction yet leaving them empty and coming back for more. The pornography industry leverages addiction, and the younger the addict, the better. I am certain you will hear from experts about the addictive qualities of pornography—about dopamine, and neural pathways, and brain development. One thing is certain, pornography has an effect on how we think about ourselves and how we think about other people. Pornography encourages the verbal and physical abuse and dehumanization of women, it brings about the victimization of teenagers, children, and the unborn, and it bolsters the sex industry and the crime rates that go with it. Simply, pornography is not good for anyone, especially young people.

Speaking of youth, it is not uncommon for me to hear stories from young people who were first exposed to pornography at very young ages. Teenagers I’ve worked with have admitted to seeing their first pornography content—most of the time, accidentally—when they were as young as 10 years old, some younger. The pornography industry is *ingenious*, taking purposeful steps to pique the curiosity of innocent children through video games, anime, cartoons, and comic books. The bill before you suggests limitations on Internet-based “*material that exploits, is devoted to, or principally consists of descriptions of actual, simulated, or animated display*”. While you may not be able to fully stop an entire industry with this bill, you can do something that moves Wisconsin in the right direction. You can act to protect our most precious possessions—our children.

In closing, I would like to speak to this thought about children being worth protecting. Abraham Lincoln said, “No man stands so tall as when he stoops to help a child.” We might say that laws and legislatures are in place because we want to guard our future. In my view,



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Assembly Bill 105 guards that which pornography desperately seeks to destroy: *The innocence of childhood.*

I urge you to approve this bill and protect the innocence, childhood, and future of Wisconsin's youth. Thank you for this opportunity and for your consideration.

Philip Alsup, Ed.D.

*Maranatha Baptist Academy*

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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 105  
COMMITTEE ON STATE AFFAIRS WEDNESDAY,  
MARCH 12, 2025  
DAVE SKAHEN, INTERIM DIRECTOR**

Thank you, Chairman Swearingen and committee members, for the opportunity to testify on Assembly Bill 105. I am Dave Skahen, the interim director of the Church Ambassador Network and I'm here to provide informational testimony on AB 105.

For those of you who may be unfamiliar with the Church Ambassador Network we exist to connect the shepherds of the church who are pastors to the shepherds of government who are governing authorities for the advancement of God's Kingdom. We greatly appreciate your service on behalf of our state, and it is our heart to minister to each of you as a person, a shepherd/leader, and a partner. Our goal is that governing authorities would see who they are as image bearers of God and servants of God, and that they would see churches and parachurch ministries as a primary resource to help with community needs.

The Church Ambassador Network, a ministry of Wisconsin Family Council, does not lobby on behalf of or in opposition to legislation; however, when church ministries or Scripture can be used as a tool in the legislators toolbelt we seek to equip them.

That is why we developed a 15-page white paper on the pornography epidemic last legislative session. If you would like to have a further discussion on the topic, I'd be more than happy to schedule a follow up meeting with you and a local church pastor from your district or a pastor that specializing in this topic to go over our entire white paper with you.

Our ministry desires to see people freed from bondage, which we define as being captured, unable to escape, from circumstance or behavior. Many behaviors in our culture may begin as a choice but become addictions that lead to bondage. Pornography leads many into bondage. Many American men and a growing number of women are addicted to pornography, but perhaps most alarming is the number of minor children who are being exposed to pornography at younger and younger ages. The Church Ambassador Network seeks to come alongside the leaders of the State of Wisconsin to help people break free from this bondage and prevent individuals, particularly minors, from ever being addicted to pornography.

Others testifying on this bill will go into more details on the statistics, however, I will squeeze out some of the main principles from our paper on the pornography epidemic that can be a tool for your toolbelt as you consider AB 105.

**First, pornography harms young people.** I served as a youth pastor in Minnesota and Wisconsin for 14 years.

In this role I can think of numerous examples of how young people have shared with me or my wife how pornography has harmed them. YourBrainOnPorn.com claims, "A teen's brain is at its peak of dopamine production and neuroplasticity, making it highly vulnerable to addiction and rewiring as their brain is not yet finished developing." When children are exposed to pornography, they are more likely to become addicted to pornography and it is harder for them to break free from the bondage the earlier they are exposed.

**Second, pornography has serious consequences.** Pornography addiction is a form of bondage. All bondage eventually ends in spiritual death. Bondage takes more from a person than he or she ever imagines.

Pornography is no different. Pornography ravages relationships, beginning with the individual and overflowing into others. Research on pornography addiction has shown to destroy relationships and marriages, impact more than the user through partners, children, and others impacted by the addiction, and has been found to harm mental health. Speaking from my experience as a pastor I have unfortunately seen how pornography addiction started at a young age has harmed many through later usage of child pornography or sexual assault.

**Third, the Bible provides us principles on bondage and addictions.**

- **Costly for individuals, families, and communities.** James 1:14-15 speaks to the danger of bondage, *"But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."*
- **Requires a broken heart and intervention to be set free.** 1 John 1:9 teaches us that freedom starts with repentance, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*
- **The law is a tool and a guide to protect people from bondage and addictions.** Galatians 3:24 highlights the old testament's purpose by proclaiming, *"So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith."*
- **Oppressors want to keep people in bondage.** When the pornography industry targets minors, they are oppressors keeping people in bondage. Isaiah 1:17 teaches *"Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause."* Proverbs 22:16 states, *"Whoever oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty."*
- **Christ can set captives and enslaved people free.** Romans 3:23 teaches us *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* Even when we were entrapped in our sin Christ died for us. Jesus can set us free and break the chains of our bondage to sin. Romans 10:9 says, *"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* Jesus frees those of us who believe in Him from the bondage of sin and the penalty of sin, but He can also break the bondage of addiction including pornography addiction.

There is much work to do within churches, government, and in our culture to address the pornography epidemic. When we can work together in transforming our communities and state to prevent individuals from being enslaved through the bondage of pornography addiction, we will see generational impact.

Thank you again Chairman Swearingen and the committee for having a hearing on AB 105 and hearing my testimony. I'm grateful for your service in our legislature. If you would like to schedule a follow up meeting with me for more information, please let me know. At this time, I am available for questions.



# Wisconsin Assembly Committee on State Affairs

March 12, 2025

Written Testimony of Daniel Weiss

President, Sexual Integrity Leaders, Inc.

Coauthor, *Treading Boldly Through a Pornographic World: A Field Guide for Parents*

Greetings, committee members. Thank you for holding this public hearing today and for your interest in protecting children and families.

My name is Daniel Weiss. I appear before you today as the father of five children, ages eleven through nineteen. I am also a researcher that has specifically focused on the personal and public harms of pornography for the past twenty-three years. I worked as a public policy analyst at Focus on the Family from 2002 to 2010. In 2011, my family and I moved to Wisconsin where I founded a non-profit organization that trains church workers and clinicians on how to help people struggling with pornography and other forms of sexual brokenness. In 2021, I coauthored a book to help parents guide their children through our very pornographic culture.

I share these elements of my personal and professional background to establish that I have invested a significant portion of my life to understanding and combatting the plague of pornography. Yet, my appearance here today is as a private and very concerned citizen of this beautiful state.

I'd like to share a story with you. When I first began researching the harms of pornography and I came across a story in France where authorities were investigating multiples instances of schoolgirls being gang-raped by their male classmates.

The prosecutor said: "It's quite extraordinary. Clearly, in their minds, it's as if what happened was some kind of virtual game. They seem to have no idea of the gravity of the acts they are accused of."

As these schoolmate rapes were occurring, several French studies were released. One found that ninety percent of boys and eighty percent of girls aged 16 and older had seen one or more hardcore porn films. Another study found that at least half of French children had seen a hardcore porn film by the time they were just 11 years old.

One of the researchers laid the problem bare when he shared, "Hardcore porn has become the principle vehicle for quite young children's understanding of everything to do with love and sexuality, sometimes their only point of reference."

Now juxtapose the idea of pornography being a young child's primary or only point of reference with the research of Professor Ana Bridges. In a 2007 study her team analyzed every scene in 50 of the most recent year's *best-selling pornography* videos. They found that:

88.2% contained physical aggression, principally spanking, gagging, and slapping, while 48.7% of scenes contained verbal aggression, primarily name-calling. Perpetrators of aggression were usually male, whereas targets of aggression were overwhelmingly female. Targets most often showed pleasure or responded neutrally to the aggression.<sup>i</sup>

This abusive content was found in the *50 most popular porn movies* that year, and that was more than 15 years ago. There is now almost no sexual taboo too offbeat, wicked, or unbelievable that it is not easily found on thousands of porn sites, none of which provide a barrier for children to access.

The health of our children is a vital and very public concern. In her 2006 study, Dr. Jill Manning shared that "children and adolescents are considered the most vulnerable audience of sexually explicit material" because they "have limited ability to emotionally, cognitively, and physiologically process obscene material they encounter voluntarily or involuntarily."<sup>ii</sup>

Emory University behavioral scientist Ralph DiClemente shared that children "can't just put [porn] in their worldview, because they don't have one. This becomes one of the building blocks that they're going to put into their worldview, and that's what we don't want."<sup>iii</sup>

Drs. Manning and DiClemente are saying that children have not yet developed the mental filters with which to process the images and ideas they encounter in pornography. Rather, pornography exposure sets a sexual template through which the rest of life is seen and understood.

Consider the public health ramifications of a full generation of children—boys and girls—being raised on violent, deeply sexist, hardcore. According to Dr. Manning, when young people are exposed to pornography they are more likely to:

- Have less trust between intimate partners;
- Become cynical about love;
- Believe that promiscuity is normal;
- Think that not having sex is unhealthy;
- Be less interested in sexual monogamy and fidelity;
- Believe marriage is sexually confining;
- Be less interested in raising children and having a family; and
- Believe better sex is possible without having affection for one's partner, thereby treating sex as a commodity and objectifying others.

Dr. Manning also found that because pornography exposes young people to age-inappropriate sexual material, it can also lead them to believe that less common sexual activity, like group sex and sadomasochistic activity is actually common; and normalize dangerous sexual behavior, like bestiality or sex with children.<sup>iv</sup>

I share this "older" research to make a point. We already knew before the internet that pornography was harmful to children. Then we researched the impact of the internet and in

longitudinal studies conducted by the Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire. In truth, we have well over forty years of scientific evidence on the harms of pornography to children—and adults, by the way. The question of harm has been settled. The question of what to do about hasn't been. I hope this committee understands the gravity of these issues and responds appropriately.

Yet, as a policy analyst that has studied this problem for decades, I also acknowledge that lawmakers and courts have struggled to find reasonable and effective policy solutions. Much work was done at the federal level in the mid to late 1990s, when the internet first came into widespread public use. Congress's first attempt, the Communications Decency Act, was struck down by the Supreme Court for being overbroad. A follow-up law, the Child Online Protection Act was also struck down in *Ashcroft vs. ACLU* in 20024.

This January, the Supreme Court agreed to revisit the issue in *Free Speech Coalition, Inc. v. Paxton*. At issue is Texas' age-verification law, but the decision will impact eighteen other state laws as well.

During oral arguments, several of the justices referred back to these earlier cases and noted that our culture has changed significantly in the intervening twenty years. The explosion of access to hardcore pornography that came with high-speed internet, the rise of the iPhone as a mobile computer, and the futility of filtering software have changed the justices' perspectives on what the government can do about this issue.

While this might seem to be a thorny legal issue, it really isn't. Wisconsin has long forbidden minors from entering strip clubs and brick-and-mortar porn shops. There is a sensibility to that. Our state allows municipalities to regulate and zone such businesses away from schools, churches, and residential neighborhoods. There is also a sensibility to this.

The bill at hand also has a sensibility to it. Our youth are being groomed by predatory businesses that exploit their natural curiosity about sexual and relationships, present false and toxic messages, and train them to become little abusers. The material they peddle destroys marriages, traumatizes kids, and prevents healthy relationships from ever forming.

Broken marriages, sexually transmitted infections, sexual abuse: these are not just personal problems. They require massive outlays by the state to mitigate. It is fiscally responsible to improve the sexual, relational, and emotional health of young people.

More than that, it is morally responsible to prevent kids from encountering such destructive material in the first place. Not moral in a religious sense, but moral in a shared cultural sense. We cannot have a just, safe, or healthy society so long as boys and girls are being raised on pornography. The #MeToo movement raised awareness of the widespread social impact of sexual exploitation. We cannot bring justice for our little girls and boys, so long as we feed them a steady diet of sexual violence, racism, and sexism in pornography.

The times, they are definitely changing, and it is long past time for the law to change as well.

Thank you for allowing me to share today. I am willing to take any questions you might have.

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<sup>i</sup> Ana J Bridges, Robert Wosnitzer, Erica Scharrer, Chyng Sun, Rachael Liberman, "Aggression and Sexual Behavior in Best-Selling Pornography Videos: A Content Analysis Update," *Violence Against Women*, 2010 Oct, 16(10):1065-85.

<sup>ii</sup> Jill C. Manning, "The Impact of Internet Pornography on Marriage and the Family: A Review of the Research," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, 13:131-165, 2006, pg. 146.

<sup>iii</sup> Dean Schabner, "Danger Zone? No Hard Data, but Plenty of Concern About How Kids React to Internet Porn," *ABCnews.com*, June 26, 2003 (accessed 07/01/2003).

<sup>iv</sup> Manning, "The Impact of Internet Pornography," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, pg. 151.



March 11, 2025

Chairman Rob Swearingen  
Vice Chairman Chanz J. Green  
Members of the Committee on State Affairs  
Wisconsin State Assembly

Re: AN ACT to create 100.76 of the statutes; relating to: the distribution of certain material on the Internet (A.B. 105)

Dear Chairman Swearingen, Vice Chairman Green, and Committee Members,

I write today to express AFA Action's support for Assembly Bill 105.

This bill is urgently needed to protect Wisconsin's children from harm. In the last twenty years, online pornography has exploded, such that addiction to pornography is considered a public health crisis. Children are particularly vulnerable, victimized by sexually graphic content online like never before.

Consider that "the US hosts more child sexual abuse content online than any other country in the world," with the United States accounting "for 30% of the global total of child sexual abuse material."<sup>1</sup> In addition, "porn sites receive more website traffic in the U.S. than Twitter, Instagram, Netflix, Pinterest, and LinkedIn combined. ... *Studies show that most young people are exposed to porn by age 13.*"<sup>2</sup>

To stem the tide of filth destroying the innocence of children, lawmakers from at least nineteen (19) states have passed legislation requiring commercial websites to verify the age of users before granting access to sexually graphic content.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Rhiannon Williams, *The US now hosts more child sexual abuse material online than any other country*, MIT Tech. Review, Apr. 26, 2022, <https://www.technologyreview.com/2022/04/26/1051282/the-us-now-hosts-more-child-sexual-abuse-material-online-than-any-other-country/>.

<sup>2</sup>FightTheNewDrug, *Why Today's Internet Porn is Unlike Anything The World Has Ever Seen*, <https://fightthenewdrug.org/why-todays-internet-porn-is-unlike-anything-the-world-has-ever-seen/>. (emphasis added).

<sup>3</sup>*US State age verification laws for adult content*, THE AGE VERIFICATION PROVIDERS ASSOCIATION, <https://avpassociation.com/4271-2/> (last visited Oct. 29, 2024).

A.B. 105 requires commercial pornographic websites to verify that users are eighteen (18) years of age or over before allowing them to access pornographic material that is harmful to children. The bill also prohibits websites from publishing obscene material, which is illegal under the “Miller test.” Websites that violate the law can be sued civilly for damages.

Internet service providers, search engines, and cloud service providers cannot be held liable under the bill for providing a connection to harmful or obscene content unless they created the content.

The bill also protects adult website users’ privacy. The bill provides that commercial pornographic websites that store a user’s identity after verifying age will be subject to civil liability for violating the adult user’s privacy.

Through my work as a Senior Legal Fellow at AFA Action, I am well versed in the law in this area. Representing legislators from fifteen (15) of the states that passed age verification laws, I submitted a friend of the court brief in the United States Supreme Court supporting Texas’s age verification law. That law is very similar to this Wisconsin bill. The Fifth Circuit upheld the Texas law, and the case is now before the United States Supreme Court.

Indeed, a similar Indiana law was recently challenged by the Big Porn industry, but the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, which also presides over federal cases from Wisconsin, has allowed the Indiana law to remain in effect.<sup>4</sup> In my judgment, the United States Supreme Court will ultimately uphold the Texas law and other age verification laws. Wisconsin lawmakers should have confidence that this Wisconsin age verification bill will be upheld.

Additionally, the provision in this bill providing civil liability for websites that publish obscene material or obscene depictions of children is clearly constitutional. The United States Supreme Court has held for decades that obscenity and child pornography are not protected speech under the First Amendment.<sup>5</sup>

As representatives of the people of Wisconsin, there is no greater service you can provide than protecting the hearts and minds of Wisconsin children. Wisconsin should join the nineteen (19) other states that have passed age verification legislation.

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<sup>4</sup>*Free Speech Coal., Inc. v. Rokita*, No. 24-2174, 2024 WL 3861733, at \*1 (7th Cir. Aug. 16, 2024).

<sup>5</sup>See *Roth v. US*, 354 U.S. 476, 484–485 (1957) (obscenity not protected under First Amendment); *Miller v. California*, 413 U.S. 15 (1973) (defining obscenity); *New York v. Ferber*, 458 U.S. 747 (1982) (child porn not protected under First Amendment).

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if I can further assist your efforts in passage of this legislation. Thank you for all you do to protect the children of Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trey Dellinger', with a large circular flourish at the end.

Trey Dellinger  
Senior Legal Fellow  
AFA Action  
trdellinger@afa.net



