



Testimony of Jill Manning, Ph.D., LMFT, CCPS, EMDR, CCTP, BH-TMH  
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March 26, 2025, 9:00 AM Central (Remote Testimony)  
Before the House Judiciary Committee  
Senate Bill 2380: Requiring Age-Verification to Access Obscene Materials Online

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**Chairman Klemin and members of the Judiciary Committee,**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 2380.

I am Dr. Jill Manning, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with twenty-five years of clinical and research experience specializing in the effects of pornography and sexual betrayal.

We face an alarming reality: underage pornography exposure is now the norm (Carroll et al., 2025). One scholar correctly called this phenomenon, “*the largest unregulated social experiment in history*.” Three decades into this experiment, it is clear the status quo is failing, and we are paying a steep price for inaction.

The Internet not only makes obscene content accessible to children—it actively *pushes it* into their lives through algorithms, tracking cookies, and deceptive marketing (Carroll et al., 2025; Manning, 2005). Between 58 and 66 percent of adolescents report unintentionally encountering pornography due to these predatory tactics (Carroll et al., 2025; Mori et al., 2023; Common Sense Media, 2022; Braun-Courville, 2009). Age verification policies and laws are a crucial step toward restoring protective buffers that existed before the advent of the Internet.

Decades of peer-reviewed research and *hundreds* of studies confirm that early exposure to pornography has severe and lasting consequences in five key areas:

1. **Neurological Development:** Exposure structurally alters brain regions responsible for impulse control, decision-making, and emotional regulation, while decreasing grey matter volume in the prefrontal cortex (Brief of Amici Curiae Scholars, 2024; Kühn et al., 2014; Draps et al., 2020). These changes increase susceptibility to compulsive behaviors, including addiction (Brief of Amici Curiae Scholars, 2024). Since my testimony before a federal Senate Sub-Committee in 2005 (Manning, 2005), the rise of smartphones and coarsening genres of pornography have contributed to a nearly *threefold increase* in compulsive sexual behavior over the last twenty years (Carnes, 2010; Dickenson et al., 2018).
2. **Cognitive and Behavioral Risks:** Pornography normalizes aggression and misogyny, particularly when violent content is consumed (Manning, 2006; Bridges et al., 2012). Most mainstream pornography, however, contains violence or degradation, according to content analyses (Bridges et al., 2012).  
  
Pornography consumption also promotes promiscuity and sexual violence, contributing to the mimicry of these behaviors by minors. In the U.K., children are now the largest group of perpetrators of sexual abuse against other children, with pornography identified as the leading factor in the quadrupling of such offenses (The Guardian, 2024).
3. **Emotional and Relational Harms:** Early exposure reduces empathy while increasing relational aggression and narcissistic tendencies (Kasper et al., 2014; Manning, 2006). It also distorts body image and handicaps one's ability to form secure and healthy attachments with others (Owen et al., 2012).
4. **Mental Health Consequences:** Pornography consumption correlates with higher rates of depression, anxiety, loneliness, delinquency, suicidality, and lower life satisfaction (Altin et al., 2024; McGraw et al., 2024; Owen et al., 2012).
5. **Academic Performance:** Research links pornography use to impaired academic performance by disrupting attention, reducing focus, and slowing cognitive function (Šević et al., 2019; Beyens et al., 2015).

In a recent Amicus Brief submitted in an age-verification case before the Supreme Court, neurosurgeon Dr. Donald Hilton and biological psychology professor Dr. Frederick Toates warned:

*“Childhood is the exact worst time for someone to be exposed to pornography... The compulsive and addictive potential of pornography is a serious public health issue—most dangerous for young people, who are most susceptible”* (Brief of Amici Curiae Scholars, 2024).

As a clinician, I have assessed and treated hundreds of children, teens, and adults harmed by pornography exposure. I have yet to meet a sexually compulsive adult who did not begin consuming this material as a minor.

Protecting minors from obscenity is a fundamental responsibility of adults. Anything we can do to delay or postpone exposure will help. The long-standing practice of enforcing age restrictions and verifications for media and substances is reasonable and widely supported (Rasmussen Reports, 2022).

Senate Bill 2380 is a long-overdue step toward aligning policy with today’s digital reality and protecting the health and safety of our youth.

I strongly urge a DO PASS on Senate Bill 2380.

Thank you.

I stand for questions.

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