

**House Judiciary Committee
Representative Lawrence Klemin, Chair
February 4, 2025
HB 1561**

Chairman Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee. I Rebecca Preussler, a board-certified pediatric psychologist with Sanford Health Fargo. I am testifying in support of House Bill 1561.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation protecting minors from the harm caused by exposure to pornography at a young age.

According to a recent survey¹, 73 percent of adolescents aged 13-17 reported seeing pornography online and 15 percent reported they first saw online pornography at age 10 or younger. This is concerning. Childhood and adolescence are critical stages in the development of a healthy sexual identity. Pornography can interfere with this process by presenting overly sexualized, often objectified portrayals of people, which can affect how children and teens view themselves and others.

Research on the influences of pornography on young people show several negative outcomes, including:

- **Increased sexual aggression** (Wright, Paul & Herbenick, 2021). Early exposure to pornographic materials can create addictive behaviors or unrealistic sexual expectations, which may affect their emotional development and social relationships.
- **Anxiety, depression, and reduced well-being** (Kohut & Štulhofer, 2018). Early exposure to explicit content can be distressing for children, causing confusion, shame, or anxiety. It can also lead to increased feelings of guilt or fear, especially if the child feels they are doing something wrong.
- **Interpersonal relationship problems** (Wright et al., 2021). Pornography often depicts unrealistic and sometimes harmful portrayals of relationships and sex, which can distort a

¹ <https://www.common sense media.org/sites/default/files/research/report/2022-teens-and-pornography-final-web.pdf>

child's understanding of healthy, consensual relationships. This can affect how they perceive intimacy and influence their future behaviors in relationships.

- **Dangerous sexual behaviors** (e.g., choking, name-calling, etc.), particularly among boys (Wright et al., 2021). Research suggests that exposure to pornography at a young age may lead to earlier sexual activity and risky sexual behaviors.

Enacting laws to protect children from the negative impacts of pornography is important and I encourage you to vote yes on HB 1561.

Thank you for your consideration. I would welcome any questions you might have.

Sincerely,
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