

Testimony of Jill Manning, Ph.D., LMFT, CCPS, EMDR, CCTP, BH-TMH
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February 10, 2025, 2:30 PM Central (Remote Testimony)
Before the House Judiciary Committee
Senate Bill 2307: Requiring Libraries and Schools to Protect Children from
Accessing Obscene Materials

Madam Chair Larson and members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 2307.

I am Dr. Jill Manning, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist specializing in the impacts of pornography and sexual betrayal on individuals and families. Drawing upon twenty-five years of clinical and research experience, I testify as a clinician, researcher, mother of teens, and daughter of a retired librarian.

The Growing Crisis of Underage Exposure

We face an alarming reality: *underage pornography exposure is now the norm* (Carroll et al., 2025).

The Internet not only grants children unprecedented access to obscene material but actively *pushes* it into their lives through algorithms, tracking cookies, and deceptive marketing (Carroll et al., 2025; Manning, 2005). However, digital sources are not the sole culprit—schools and libraries also contribute to this exposure, compounding the sexually explicit *load* youth encounter (Solas, 2023).

The sheer volume of explicit books and content in public and school libraries is extensive. Furthermore, as Nicole Solas, a Senior Fellow with the Education Freedom Center, points out: “These books do not simply provide clinical sex education describing anatomy and reproduction. They contain numerous *pornographic passages and pictures* meant to instruct children on sexual pleasure, to sexually excite children, or push...ideological views of sex and sexuality (Solas, 2023).”

Decades of peer-reviewed research (Carroll et al., 2025; Owen et al., 2012; Manning, 2006) confirm that early exposure to sexually explicit content has profound and lasting consequences.

Documented Harms of Pornography Exposure on Youth

To underscore the urgency of this issue, I will highlight five categories of harm—which studies show adults grossly underestimate (Wright et al., 2023).

1. Neurological Development:

- Exposure to pornography structurally alters brain regions responsible for impulse control, decision-making, and emotional regulation while also decreasing grey matter volume in the prefrontal cortex (Brief of Amici Curiae Scholars, 2024; Kühn et al., 2014; Draps et al., 2020).
- These structural changes then increase susceptibility to compulsive behaviors, including addiction (Brief of Amici Curiae Scholars, 2024).

2. Cognitive and Behavioral Risks:

- Pornography normalizes aggression and misogyny, especially when violent content is consumed (Manning, 2006), and *most* mainstream pornography *is* violent according to content analyses (Bridges et al., 2012).
- It also normalizes promiscuity and sexual violence (Manning, 2006), leading children to mimic what they see. A recent report out of the U.K. reveals children are now the largest group of perpetrators of sexual abuse against children, with pornography identified as the leading factor in the quadrupling of such offenses in recent years (The Guardian, 2024).
- Additionally, exposure fosters mechanical views of sex and triggers earlier sexual initiation, increasing rates of sexually transmitted infections over the lifespan (Manning, 2006), and relational dissatisfaction in adulthood (Willoughby et al., 2022).

3. Emotional and Relational Harms:

- Early exposure reduces empathy while increasing relational aggression and narcissistic tendencies (Kasper et al., 2014; Manning, 2006).

- It lowers self-esteem, distorts body image, and diminishes the ability to form secure attachments (Owen et al., 2012; Manning, 2006).

4. Mental Health Consequences:

- Pornography consumption correlates with higher rates of depression, anxiety, loneliness, delinquent behaviors, 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).

Each of these harms reflect a grave failure to protect the well-being of our youth.

Expert Warnings on the Harm to Developing Brains

In a recent Amicus Brief submitted to the federal Supreme Court, neurosurgeon Dr. Donald Hilton and biological psychology professor Dr. Frederick Toates stated:

“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).”

Additionally, the American College of Pediatricians warns that *“because of its harmfulness to children, pornography must never be used as a tool to teach children human sexuality (American College of Pediatricians, 2024).”*

Why Senate Bill 2307 Is Essential

A 2018 study published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* (Dickenson et al., 2018) found that 8.6 percent of American adults struggle with compulsive sexual behaviors and urges, the majority of whom were first exposed to pornography as minors. This means one in every 11.6 adults struggles with sexual compulsivity.

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

Since my testimony before a federal Senate Sub-Committee in 2005 (Manning, 2005), I have observed this situation worsening. 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).

Parents across political spectrums are now cataloging explicit school library content on independent websites and social media platforms because no universal system alerts them to sexually explicit materials in schools or libraries (Solas, 2023). *This is not an endeavor born of ample free time—it is a desperate response to a systemic failure.*

Protecting minors from obscenity is not “censorship” or “moral panic” but a fundamental responsibility of adults. The long-established practice of rating, restricting, and monitoring media for age appropriateness—as is done with radio, film, video games, and television (Solas, 2023)—is both reasonable and widely supported (Rasmussen Reports, 2022).

This is not about free speech or intellectual freedom—it is about child welfare. Schools and libraries must be safe spaces for learning and growth. While balancing the ideals of American librarianship with the protection of minors is complex and nuanced, practical solutions exist to reduce harm and support parents in raising healthy, well-adjusted children.

For this reason, I urge a DO PASS on Senate Bill 2307.

Thank you. I stand for questions.

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