

Dear Madam Chair Larson and members of the Judiciary Committee-

My name is Maggie Blaylock and I am an Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC-MH) in the state of South Dakota. I am also a CSAT (Certified Sexual Addictions Therapist) and a CMAT (Certified Multiple Addictions Therapist). I own a price practice in Sioux Falls. In my practice and with my specialty I work daily with the devastation of the aftermath on individual lives and marriages because of sexual addiction. In almost every case I work with, pornography use was an originating factor in their addiction.

Sadly, I became a licensed and trained professional because 13 years ago my own marriage was devastated by sexual addiction. My husband was the child of a pastor, and his parents tried very hard to monitor the content that he consumed. Unfortunately, he had access to porn he found at his grandparents' home and at a friend's house. When high speed internet hit while he was in college this behavior turned into a major addiction in his life until he eventually could no longer hide it. I became a trained professional because there were no local therapists in my state dealing with such complex issues at the time. We had to travel to Colorado to find someone skilled enough to know how to help us get into recovery and eventually repair our broken relationship. Sadly, today, I am only 1 of 2 CSATs in my state and last I checked there more recently is one CSAT in North Dakota. Before there was a trained professional in North Dakota I have had clients who drive down into the state of SD to a location that they can find wifi to work with me.

In 2017 the state of South Dakota declared pornography a public health crisis. Here are three reasons (they stated) why pornography should be recognized as harmful to public health:

- 1) Exposure to pornography is unmanageable at the individual level: individuals and families are unable to "opt-out" of pornography, and 27% of children are being exposed to it before they've even reached puberty.
 - Most recently Google even accepted the reality of this truth when they changed their safe search settings to default people in an attempt to make the internet a safer place for young people.
 - More and more younger children are accessing internet pornography. The average age of first exposure is 11 (Randel and Sanchez, "Huffington Post" - 2016). However, "children under 10 now account for 22% of online porn consumption under 18" (British Journal of School Nursing.)

- 2) Pornography use shrinks the brain: a 2014 study found that increased pornography use is linked to decreased brain matter in the areas of motivation and decision-making, impaired impulse control, and desensitization to sexual reward.

-When one looks at pornography they are using the reward system part of their brain. This would be the limbic system of fight, flight or freeze. This area of the brain is also called the reptilian brain. Pornography or sexual content creates a supernatural stimulus that artificially enhances the release of chemicals in the reward system. The chemicals have a molecular structure very similar to cocaine. We have found that habitual porn use creates grey matter in the brain (brain shrinkage) in the prefrontal cortex.

3) Pornography is linked to increased sexual violence: a 2015 meta-analysis of 22 studies from seven countries found that internationally the consumption of pornography was significantly associated with increases in verbal and physical aggression, among males and females alike.

Unfortunately, since 2017 the state of South Dakota has done little to no work to make more legislative actions of change or protection for children in this arena. I am honored to be here today to talk about a topic that I passionately believe is an issue that we need to take steps toward correcting. I cannot stress enough how big of a problem we are yet to see. I work daily with clients whose lives became unmanageable due to addiction and many of them are older and barley had access to porn or sexual content compared to what our youth in society has today. I truly believe that we are just beginning to see the impact on those who have had widespread access to porn or sexual content at an early age due to its availability. We have developed many different laws throughout our country's history as technology has advanced. We have speed limits and seat belt laws; we have building codes and such for the safety of the general public. The same fits here with the arena of pornography and sexual content. We need laws in place to protect the young minds of society until their brains are fully grown and they have been educated and can make their own decisions about what is healthy for them. Thank you for considering a step toward protection for the children of your state by passing Senate Bill 2307