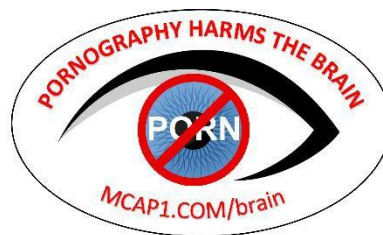


Making a Difference

Newsletter for
Maryland Coalition Against Pornography, Inc.



MCAP Hotline: 301-439-8475

TOGETHER WE CARE

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Spring 2021

Maryland General Assembly Passes HB 180 To Deal With Sexting By Minors

MCAP submitted testimony to comment on HB 180 and other bills that had been crafted to address the *In re: SK* court case in which a 16 year old girl was allowed to be prosecuted for sending a sexually explicit video of herself to two friends. Some bills submitted would have nearly gutted the ability to prosecute teen offenders for child porn sharing pics of themselves or where “consent” seemed to have been granted. MCAP felt that this concept seemed fraught with danger, given that bad actors may be involved and coercion could be hard to detect. HB 180 seems to offer a balance of the need to prevent creation and distribution of child pornography, the need to protect minors from being coerced into sending images of themselves, and the goal of preventing minors from being criminally prosecuted for what has, unfortunately, become a too common practice. The lead sponsor was Delegate Luke Clippinger, who is also the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. Enacted under Article II, Section 17(c) of the Maryland Constitution - Chapter 393.

A key provision of the bill allows a court to refer teen offenders to participate in an age-appropriate educational program about the risks and consequences of sexting.

About half of the states in the country have passed legislation dealing with this difficult behavior by minors. Texas developed “Before You Text,” a sexting prevention course upon which Maryland could model their educational program. More details about the genesis of this legislation and considerations were described by an [article in the *Baltimore Sun*](#).

Facebook and Instagram Hotbeds of Child Porn

Facebook published its biannual community standards enforcement report which reveals an increase in child exploitation content removal - tens of millions of posts, photos and videos were removed over the past six months for violating FB’s terms of service that restrict the use of child pornography, drug and gun sales, and terrorism.

Facebook says it identifies most of the content automatically using artificial intelligence and advanced software before users can ever see it. Most shocking is the dramatic increase in the removal of child pornography. Facebook says that it removed [about 11.6 million pieces of content](#) deemed to be child nudity and sexual exploitation of children in the third quarter, roughly double the number removed for the same reason in the first quarter.

On Instagram, 1.2 million photos and videos involving child nudity or exploitation were removed over the second and third quarters.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has faced increasing scrutiny over his failed efforts to curtail the spread of child exploitation on Facebook, which came to a crescendo at a [congressional hearing](#) last month. Representative Ann Wagner (R-MO) scolded Zuckerberg at the hearing, saying, “You are not working hard enough, and end-to-end encryption is not going to help the problem.”

“We work harder than any other company to identify this behavior,” Zuckerberg said in response.

FBI Director Christopher Wray has also been critical of Facebook’s plan to encrypt all of its users’ messages in the near future. Wray says that it would be a “[dream come true](#)” for child pornographers. The *New York Times* in September [claimed that Facebook Messenger](#) was responsible for nearly 12 million of the 18.4 million worldwide reports of child sexual abuse material.

During a press call with reporters on Wednesday, Zuckerberg responded to concerns about the vast amount of child exploitation content found on the company’s networks, claiming that it was actually a positive thing for the industry and society.

“There’s this inverted incentive to look at the numbers that we’re putting out and come to the conclusion that just because we’re reporting big numbers, there’s so much more harmful content on our services than others,” Zuckerberg said. “But what it says is we’re working harder to identify and take action on this [type of content] more than others are.”

He said content violations can often be detected through behavior patterns, such as who is messaging whom. “We can look at patterns of bad activity,” he said. “We look at the patterns of activity of the accounts.”

2020 saw a spike in child sexual abuse content online. Facebook reported more than 20 million child sexual abuse images in 2020, more than any other company. The material was flagged to the NCMEC (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children). According to the report, Facebook recorded 20,307,216 instances for child sexual exploitation on its platforms in 2020. The figures cover Instagram as well as the main Facebook site. The full report has figures for other companies, and shows that Facebook made more than 35 times as many reports as the next company on the list, Google. Facebook’s platforms contain the vast majority of all child sexual content flagged to the NCMEC, which represent a 31% increase on the 16 million images reported to them by the platform in 2019.

Facebook highlighted its proactive policies and use of technology to detect and remove child exploitation material in response to the increase. “Using industry-leading technology, over 99% of child exploitation content we remove from Facebook and Instagram is found and taken down before it’s reported to us,” said a spokesperson to Insider in January.

Other sites remove material after it is found or flagged to them, but don’t have proactive policies to find it. Following Facebook, the platforms with the most reports were:

Google with 546,704.
Snapchat with 144,095.
Microsoft with 96,776.
Twitter with 65,062.

TikTok with 22,692.
Omegle* with 20,265.
Mindgeek with 13,229.
*video & text chat platform

Mindgeek, the company that owns porn websites including Pornhub, lost business when a series of credit card companies severed ties with Pornhub after it was revealed by The New York Times’ that

the site was hosting child sexual exploitation videos.

Facebook said in a blog post ahead of the release of the NCMEC report that it was building new tools to track down child sexual abuse material, and that most of the material it identified was old material being shared or re-sent. "We found that more than 90 percent of this content was the same as or visually similar to previously reported content," said the post. [Editor's comment: if so, how is it not even easier to detect such material and delete it?] "And copies of just six videos were responsible for more than half of the child exploitative content we reported in that time period. While this data indicates that the number of pieces of content does not equal the number of victims, and that the same content, potentially slightly altered, is being shared repeatedly, one victim of this horrible crime is one too many."

NCMEC surmises that COVID-19 lockdowns were likely among the factors behind the overall increase in the amount of material reported to them in 2020. Vulnerable children were less able to get help, and there was a new trend of abuse being **livestreamed on demand**, said the NCMEC at the time.

The 160 companies signed up to the NCMEC's child sexual abuse reporting mechanism voluntarily share the information, which is then used by law enforcement to investigate people committing the crimes. There are no laws in the US compelling platforms to proactively search out child sexual abuse material.

Disturbing Trend: Study Finds Internet Sex Predators Are Grooming Children to Record their Own Abuse and Film Siblings and Friends

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) released a study revealing: 511 self-generated child sexual abuse images and videos assessed were determined to involve siblings.

That's 8 images or videos each working day. In 65% of cases, one or both children engaged in direct sexual contact with the other. (Study snapshot includes the three months between September 28 and December 23, 2020).

Analysts said these children were manipulated or coerced into sexual activity by adults online via a live stream and that these videos and snapshots were subsequently shared widely using a variety of different web platforms.

Children as young as three years old appeared to be involved in abuse. The average age of the youngest sibling was 10 and the eldest 12. For more information on grooming tactics and how to talk to your kids about internet predators, visit [Predators 101](#).

HEROES OF THE FIGHT WHO HAVE RECENTLY BEEN LOST

We note and pay tribute to, with sadness, 2 champions in the fight against pornography lost this spring: [Judith Riesman](#) on April 9, and [Gary Wilson](#), the author of the best-selling book *Your Brain On Porn: Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction*, presenter of the immensely popular TEDx talk "The Great Porn Experiment" (14+ million views), and creator of the website [YourBrainOnPorn.com](#), a clearinghouse for the latest research, media, and self-reports on pornography's effects and potential harms. Gary will be remembered for his kindness, empathy, and courage. On May 20, Gary died following years of chronic illness.

ACTION BOX

[+] The annual NCOSE (National Center on Sexual Exploitation) Summit will be July 20-24. Join us as part of an MCAP team of 20 people! Contact us at mcapinc@mcap1.com no later than **June 30** if interested in joining with us.



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