Testimony in Support of House Bill 293-FN

Honorable Members of the New Hampshire General Court,

I am here to express my strong support for House Bill 293-FN, which aims to limit the ability for minors to access obscene material on mobile devices. I live in Dunbarton, New Hampshire and my wife and I have six children. I have published papers and patents in cyber security and managed a hundred million dollars in technology research for the department of defense (DARPA) in addition to founding AI and cyber security firms here in NH. I have testified as an expert witness for a similar bill in Utah in 2021 which passed (and an updated version passed unanimously in 2024!)

I am here to testify this bill does not represent a technical or unreasonable hardship for the multi-billion dollar manufacturers involved. Forcing device manufacturers to turn on existing filtering functionality for minors is such a simple, obvious step that it's surprising that a bill is even required, given the manufacturer's have the age of the users and filtering technology present on the device already. I'm also happy to answer questions during this testimony or assist the committee afterwards in seeing this or similar legislation passed here in NH, I made numerous modifications to address some reasonable technical and economic concerns that manufacturers had for the bill in Utah present in the earliest versions.

This bill presents a needed step towards the important goal of improving the health and safety of minors in our society who are already suffering mental harm from increasingly ubiquitous mobile devices and the lack of safeguards available to parents.

Protection of Minors: The primary objective of this bill is to help safeguard the well-being of children in our state. By mandating that manufacturers activate the filters on devices like smartphones and tablets that *already exist*, we are taking a proactive step in preventing minors from being exposed to content that is not suitable for their age.

Encouraging Responsible Manufacturing: By making manufacturers responsible for activating filters on devices, we are enforcing logical protections for children using existing technology that should already be on by default.

Legal and Financial Accountability: The bill introduces a private right of action for parents, which serves as a deterrent for those who might disable these filters maliciously. This measure ensures that there are consequences for actions that could harm minors, providing a legal framework to support the moral and ethical obligations we have towards our youth.

Economic Consideration: Although there might be indeterminable costs associated with judicial and correctional systems due to new penalties, these should be weighed against the long-term societal benefits of reducing exposure to harmful content which are well documented. The potential for civil actions might also encourage compliance, reducing the need for extensive litigation. By requiring manufacturers to activate filters which already exist on smartphones and tablets and not requiring them to invent new technology the burden imposed is reduced to simply modifying the existing default confirmations on a device, not the millions or billions of dollars a tech lobbyist will claim are incurred.

There are a myriad of papers and studies documenting the harm pornography has on every population group, but particularly the traumatic effects it can have on minors who are still developing. Experts more qualified than me can testify to this, but I have included a sample of the areas below for reference.

Mental Health Harms:

- **Depression and Anxiety:** A study mentioned by the American College of Pediatricians indicates that children report feelings of disgust, shock, embarrassment, anger, fear, and sadness after

viewing pornography, which can contribute to anxiety and depression.

- **Emotional Disturbance:** Michael Flood's study from 2009 in the Child Abuse Review suggests that such exposure can affect the way minors interact with others and view sexuality, leading to long-term mental health problems.
- **Self-Esteem and Body Image:** Adolescent consumers of pornography have been found to have lower levels of sexual self-esteem according to research cited in Marripedia. Additionally, both male and female adolescents who view pornography frequently tend to engage in more self-objectification and body surveillance, potentially leading to body image issues.

Trauma:

- **Sexual Violence and Aggression:** Multiple studies indicate that exposure to sexually explicit and violent media is associated with greater acceptance of domestic and sexual violence, which can be traumatic for young viewers.
- **Normalization of Harmful Behaviors:** UNESCO and other child welfare organizations have expressed concern that viewing pornography might normalize abusive behaviors in young minds, leading to a desensitization or acceptance of violence and aggression in sexual contexts.

Other Health Harms:

- **Addiction:** The adolescent brain is particularly susceptible to addiction due to its developmental stage. There's a consensus in research, including from Culture Reframed, that frequent viewing of pornography can lead to changes in the brain's reward circuitry, potentially leading to addiction, with one-third of frequent viewers admitting they watch more than they want to.
- **Sexual Health Practices:** Studies from the Australian Institute of Family Studies suggest that pornography use among

adolescents is linked with unsafe sexual health practices, such as not using condoms, which can lead to higher risks of STDs and unintended pregnancies.

- **Impact on Relationships:** Longitudinal studies have shown that early exposure to pornography can negatively affect future sexual and romantic relationships, leading to "sexual uncertainty," dissatisfaction, and a skewed perception of normal sexual behavior, as discussed by the Institute for Family Studies.
- **Academic Performance:** There's research indicating that pornography use can negatively affect academic performance among youth, as it might distract from educational activities or contribute to behavioral issues.

In conclusion, House Bill 293-FN is a measured, thoughtful approach to a significant societal issue. It respects the freedom of adults while providing protection by default for minors from harmful, addictive content which is illegal for them to access. I urge you to support this bill for the sake of our children and their healthy development.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jason Syversen
9 Tucker Hill Road
Dunbarton, NH 03046