

Thank you, Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joseph Kohm. I am an attorney and the Public Policy Director for Family Policy Alliance. We are a nonprofit organization based in Colorado Springs, which focuses on advancing family values and religious freedom through legislation across the nation. The bill presented today prevents minors from encountering inappropriate online material through age verification requirements. As a result, I am asking you to vote yes on HB 2592/SB 394.

With the rise of technology, minors currently have nearly unlimited access to adult websites, many of which contain inappropriate and pornographic material. In fact, studies show that by the age of 17, about 75% of adolescents have been exposed to pornography¹. This statistic is quite alarming and is made possible by the fact that many of these websites are accessible without parental permission or age verification.

Parents have the right and the ultimate responsibility of directing the upbringing of their children. As a result, age verification requirements for adult websites are necessary to prevent adolescents from accessing inappropriate and pornographic material. These bills put parents back in their rightful place of controlling whether and how their children engage with dangerous pornographic material online.

Parental oversight is already required for a variety of things, including liability waivers and life insurance contracts. Should it not also be obligatory in decisions relating to children's exposure to pornography? Here are some simple but powerful reasons why it matters.

Research has proven that pornography harms children. In fact, studies show that 88.2% of pornographic videos depict sexual violence, while 48.7% of these same videos include some kind of verbal abuse.² Furthermore, studies show that 53% of male adolescents and

¹ "National Survey Reveals 73% of Teens Have Seen Porn – Many Watching It at School," *Fight the New Drug* (2024), <https://fightthenewdrug.org/national-survey-reveals-73-of-teens-have-seen-porn-many-watching-it-at-school/>.

² "How Porn Can Promote Sexual Violence," *Fight the New Drug* (2024), <https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-can-promote-sexual-violence/>.

39% of female adolescents actually believe the lie that pornography is an accurate portrayal of sex.³ Thus, adolescents are learning about sexuality from a perspective which portrays sex as physical abuse, instead of receiving sex education from a parent or guardian. In addition, studies reveal that out of those individuals who have been exposed to pornography, 58% accessed the material unintentionally.⁴ As a result, adolescents are becoming addicted to pornography through interaction with certain websites that parental involvement could have prevented. Therefore, the age verification requirements in the bill before you today are necessary to prevent these minors from encountering inappropriate and pornographic material and to empower parents to protect their kids from such exposure. Finally, right now the average age of first exposure to pornography is between the ages of 7 and 13; therefore, it is necessary for legislation to restore parental rights to protect their children from pornography.⁵

Not only does pornography harm children’s mental well-being – there is also a strong correlation between pornography, human trafficking, and sexual abuse. In fact, research reveals that it is impossible to determine whether pornographic videos portray consensual sex, as many adult sites contain explicit videos and images of adults and minors, who have not consented to filming such content.⁶ Therefore, age verification requirements are essential to preventing such abuse by limiting the access of pornography and explicit material to minors.

Some have argued against these measures, claiming that the government should stay out of matters relating to children’s online access and that the decision ultimately belongs to parents. We wholeheartedly affirm that decisions pertaining to a child’s time online belong to parents. This is why I strongly urge you to support this bill. The age verification

³ “The Issue,” *Fight the New Drug* (2024), <https://fightthenewdrug.org/>.

⁴ “National Survey Reveals 73% of Teens Have Seen Porn – Many Watching It at School,” *Fight the New Drug*

⁵ “Young people, pornography & age verification,” *British Board of Film Classification* (2020), <https://www.bbfc.co.uk/about-classification/research>.

⁶ “How the Porn Industry Profits From Nonconsensual Content and Abuse,” *Fight the New Drug* (2024), <https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-the-porn-industry-profits-from-nonconsensual-content-and-abuse/>.

requirements will place these choices and others back into the hands of parents across the state of Kansas.

Kansas is not the first state to propose such age verification bills. Several states across the country, including Texas and Virginia, have already passed legislation to put these laws into effect. Many of the bills being proposed in the state legislatures are bipartisan efforts. Kansas should also join this noble effort and implement age verification legislation such as HB 2592/SB 394, as pornography continues to harm children across the nation.

Parental rights are the backbone of the family, and one of parents' rights is to protect their child's innocence. HB 2592/SB 394 protects this right by reestablishing the role of parents in their children's consumption of online material.

In closing, HB 2592/SB 394 ensures parental involvement in children's internet consumption, while restoring parental rights in the state of Kansas. In addition, it prevents minors from gaining access to pornographic material that harms children and will have a negative impact on their views of sex, marriage, and family. Furthermore, the bill sanctions companies that fail to implement and uphold these age verification requirements. As a result, we strongly urge you to vote *yes* on HB 2592/SB 394.

Thank you.