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Proponent Testimony for HR 6016

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House Committee on Federal and State Affairs

March 16, 2017

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding a hearing on HR 6016. The Kansas Catholic Conference strongly supports this resolution.

Pornography is often thought of as a purely private matter. This point of view is understandable, but fails to appreciate the very public, societal ramifications of the mass use of pornography. It is long past time for policymakers to consider the deleterious effects that pornography has on the common good.

When considering the great harm inflicted upon the human person by pornography, one need first look no further than the men and women who are directly exploited by the industry. Former Playboy Playmate Pamela Anderson recently called pornography a "public hazard," and many others who have worked in pornographic roles have shared their stories of the degradation and dehumanization that is part and parcel of working in porn. Society has laws against prostitution because it recognizes that even if consensual, some sexual activity is fundamentally exploitative and demeaning and should be proscribed. It should be remembered that pornography, too, is a business where sex is for sale and human dignity is trampled upon.

That said, pornography does not just harm consenting adults. Consider for example the evidence of a nexus between sexually oriented businesses and human trafficking. Then there are the children. Other witnesses will undoubtedly lay out the statistics of how many children are being exposed to pornography at an early age, and the extraordinarily harmful effects that exposure has on a young person. The numbers are staggering, and terrifying. At a time when family breakdown has reached

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unprecedented levels, wreaking havoc on the social fabric (not to mention government social services budgets), marriages are being destroyed by men's pornography addictions and young people are having their childhood innocence -- and potentially their capacity for healthy relationships later in life -- shattered by early exposure to porn.

Much has been written of late on the opioid epidemic that is ravaging towns across America. In the face of this crisis, what policymaker would respond, "these are consenting adults," and wash their hands of it? The pornography epidemic has received less attention, but is similarly insidious and larger in scope than most people realize. We live in times when society is riven by deep disagreements over the nature of human sexuality, but those disagreements should not prevent us from coming together to honestly assess the real damage that pornography is doing to women and men, to children, to the family, and to society.

Thank you for your consideration.