



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 130/ASSEMBLY BILL 105

Thank you Mr. Chairman and committee members for today's committee hearing on Senate Bill 130 and Assembly Bill 105, relating to the distribution of certain material to minors. Broadly speaking, the bill requires internet porn sites to have an age verification method to ensure that the person accessing the site is 18 years or older.

This bill is based off of successful laws in 25 other states. In each of those states, this legislation has passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, with literally only a handful of "no" votes. The law has been signed by both Republican and Democratic governors. While this law has faced constitutional challenge in most every state, in June, the US Supreme Court held that this type of law was constitutional because it is narrowly tailored to protect minors from potentially harmful materials. I am pleased to tell you that, with the exceptions of stylistic differences in drafting between Texas and Wisconsin, it is virtually identical to the Texas law that was upheld by the Supreme Court.

Last month, Pornhub.com was the fourth-most visited Internet site in the world. Four of the top 20 most visited internet sites are pornography websites. Unfortunately, these websites, photos, and videos are easily accessed by children. A recent survey found that the average age a child is first exposed to online pornography is 11 or 12 years old – the age of a sixth grader. Seventy-one percent of teenagers under 18 have claimed to stumble upon internet pornography without seeking it out.

Pornography acts like a drug, and like any drug, it's particularly harmful to children. Being on this committee, you have probably heard many times about brains of children that are still developing. Pornography triggers the same part of the brain that an addictive drug use does. It can literally become an addiction. The younger exposure begins, the less likely a child will be able to handle the exposure to pornography properly. Pornography gives false representations of what a person should look like, what an ideal body is, what normal sex is, etc. People with early exposure get a warped view of what sex is like, and are more willing to accept and/or seek risky behavior. Exposure also raises the risk of depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. If you CAREFULLY look for research online, you will see tons of research showing the harm to children.

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As Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart said about pornography, “I don’t know how to define it, but I know it when I see it.” The legal term of art used in the bill is “material harmful to children,” and it defines it about how you would expect it to be defined. It begins on page 2, line 10 of the bill and continues through Page 3, line 12 of the bill.

This bill also contains reasonable protections for everyone involved. We exempt material with serious literary, artistic and/or scientific value and legitimate news media. The amendment goes a step further to ensure search engines such as Google are caught up with this bill and removes the term “obscene material” to clean up possible confusion. The bill also protects Internet Service Providers, targeting only the porn-hosting websites themselves.

As far as age verification methods, the bill is flexible. There are third party companies that offer age verification services. We don’t want to hamstring companies or force them out of business, but we want to make sure kids aren’t seeing this harmful material.

There is one major difference between this law and Texas’s law. We’ve heard complaints that a data breach could expose adults who are accessing adult websites – which I want to be clear - they will still be able to do. Unlike the Texas law, SB 130/AB 105 protects privacy of end users by prohibiting the age-verification service from retaining personally-identifiable information. The website must verify the age, and then delete the data. I suppose a hack could occur the exact second you are putting your information into the website, but this provision minimizes the risk. In the event of a data breach, and information is leaked, a person whose data is leaked would have the right to go to court to seek damages.

Internet pornography is pervasive. It is shockingly easy for young children with impressionable minds to stumble onto, or seek out online pornography. This will not and is not designed to eliminate children’s access to internet porn. But it will make it more difficult, which is the goal of the bill.

Thank you.



JOY GOEBEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 5th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention, Children and Families

Senate Bill 130

Representative Joy Goeben

October 8, 2025

Good Morning Chairman James and members of the Senate Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention, Children and Families. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 130 (SB 130).

Senate Bill 130 provides a responsible, thoughtful approach to safeguarding minors from harmful online content by requiring a reasonable age-verification method to access adult content online. I think we can all agree the internet offers incredible opportunities for education, connection, and innovation. However, it also presents serious risks, especially for children, who can be inadvertently exposed to explicit material that no parent would want them to access.

In the last two decades, we have seen the consumption of online pornography explode to such a level it is now considered a public health crisis. With the advent of the internet becoming integral to our every day lives, it also brought with it a level of danger for minors. Porn is no longer a dirty magazine found under a mattress. It's pervasive, hardcore, and easily accessible and it targets our youngest generation to hook them early and keep them addicted.

A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association examined brain structure and functional connectivity and found an adverse effect with pornography consumption. According to the study, pornography consumption in adult males led to an increased risk for internet sex addiction, alcohol use disorder, and depression. Given the complexities of brain development in adolescence, pornography is another risk factor for youth in battling mental health challenges.

Wisconsin is not alone in recognizing the urgency of this issue. In recent years, 19 states have passed similar legislation aimed at ensuring online spaces are safer for minors. Louisiana led the way in 2022 by becoming the first state to require government-issued identification for access to adult content. Many of the concepts before you today are modeled on the Louisiana law.

Senate Bill 130 is structured to align with these successful policies, incorporating key provisions that have been implemented in other states:

- **Mandatory Age Verification** – Businesses hosting substantial amounts of content harmful to minors must implement a reasonable verification method to ensure users are at least 18 years old.
- **Privacy Protection** – Websites and third-party verifiers are prohibited from retaining any personal data after verifying a user's age.
- **Prohibition of Obscene Material** – The bill strengthens existing laws by ensuring explicit and harmful content is not easily accessible to minors.
- **Clear Legal Enforcement** – Businesses failing to comply could face civil liability, allowing individuals or entities to seek damages and legal recourse.

This legislation does not infringe on free speech or impose an undue burden on consumer, it simply places responsibility on businesses that distribute explicit content to ensure minors are not exposed.

Wisconsin now has an opportunity to join the growing list of states taking meaningful action to protect children online. I urge the Committee to advance this legislation, ensuring that Wisconsin families can have greater peace of mind in an increasingly digital world.



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Senator Jesse James, Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention, Children and Families

FROM: David Earleywine, Associate Director

DATE: October 8, 2025

RE: Support for AB 105 / SB 130, Age Verification for Pornography

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Wisconsin, appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in support of AB 105 and SB 130.

These bills prohibit business entities from knowingly and intentionally publishing or distributing material harmful to minors on the internet without performing a reasonable age verification method to verify the age of individuals attempting to access the website. By the end of 2025, 25 states will have age verification laws in effect and a majority of the remaining states have at least introduced similar legislation.¹

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that pornography “does grave injury to the dignity of the participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world. It is a grave offense. Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials” (CCC 2354). In other words, pornography is contrary to human dignity which causes those who view it to treat people like “objects” for personal gratification.

The average age of first exposure to pornography is 11.² That means elementary school age children are being exposed to pornography. This can be traumatizing for youth. As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops writes “Seeing it steals their innocence and gives them a distorted image of sexuality, relationships, and men and women, which may then affect their behavior. It can also make them more vulnerable to being sexually abused, since their understanding of appropriate behavior can be damaged.”³

In the last 20 years, pornography has grown increasingly affordable, accessible, and anonymous. The rise of high-speed internet made it accessible online with a few clicks. The rise of the smartphone allowed everyone to carry around porn at their fingertips at all times.

Consider these statistics regarding the rise of smartphones and pornography for children:

1. In 2022, 95% of teens owned smartphones. This included 53% of 11-year-olds.⁴
2. In 2021, 42% of children had a smartphone by age 10 (in 2009 only 9% had a cell phone of any kind at age 10).⁵
3. By October 2023, approximately 97% of traffic to Pornhub.com came from a mobile device.⁶
4. In 2019, the world’s top porn site had more than 1 BILLION visitors per month.⁷ This was more visitors than Amazon, Twitter, and Netflix combined.
5. As of 2022, 73% of teens reported they had consumed pornography.⁸
6. In the same study, 15% of teens reported consuming pornography by age 10.

In short, these statistics show an alarming trend of pornography consumption by teens and children. Even the World Health Organization recognized this epidemic in 2022, when it included "compulsive sexual behavior"—which includes habitual pornography—to its list of impulse control disorders.

These statistics are alarming but only tell part of the story. Viewing pornography is linked to both short-term and long-term negative outcomes. “In a literature review of four case studies and nine articles from 2000 to 2022 ... in all facets of the users lives negative consequences were seen.”⁹

In the short term, individuals using pornography often experience loneliness, shame, withdrawal from social events, and other negative effects. Long term, porn consumption is linked to poor mental health, sexism and objectification, sexual violence, and other negative outcomes.¹⁰

As one study states, children are the most vulnerable due to the “malleable nature of their brains” and adolescence is when “most mental health conditions and addictions develop.” Furthermore, the “academic literature makes it clear that pornography use has significant impacts on adolescent development.”¹¹

Specifically, “pornography consumption by youth has been linked to the exacerbation of paraphilias, an increase in sexual aggression perpetration and victimization and ... an increase in online sexual victimization.”¹²

A 2023 study found that: exposure to pornography promoted “teen dating violence,” “victimization of females in sexually abusive relationships,” and “behavioral changes in adolescents ... including the adoption of unsafe sexual practices.” The study also found that “rapes, violent crimes, and sexual assaults” were higher in adolescents who spent greater time viewing pornography. Lastly, the study reported pornography could lead to “teen pregnancies as a result of unsafe sexual practices emulating the online content.”¹³

Those that emphasize the free speech rights of the pornography industry will emphasize that parents can protect their children by installing filters on their devices. Such an argument does not acknowledge that the industry has adapted to these filtering devices. Simply put, individual parents cannot compete against a sophisticated industry that uses every trick to lure in viewers. What makes online pornography so different today than in the past is that viewers don’t have to go looking for it. No matter what filters parents may put on their devices, the porn industry finds ways to ensnare children. In essence, without meaningful restrictions, children are carrying poison in their phones.

Related to this is the fact that most parents do not have the ability to properly monitor their children’s use of the internet. Most parents work, in addition to raising their families, and have limited time and knowledge to keep up with the ever-changing landscape of social platforms.

Society does not just leave it up to parents to keep their children out of strip clubs. It also obliges strip clubs to refuse admission to minors. It follows then that platforms must block minors from virtual spaces that peddle pornography. This is not a violation of free speech. The Supreme Court upheld this logic in *Free Speech Coalition v. Paxton* just this summer.¹⁴ Adults can still produce and consume porn. But now that porn addiction has been definitively shown to damage children, governments have a responsibility to prohibit the porn industry from targeting children. After all, we don’t allow the tobacco or alcohol industries to target children. Minors must present an ID when attempting to purchase tobacco and alcohol. The same should be required when they attempt to access online porn.

For all these reasons, we strongly urge you to support this legislation. Thank you.

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- ¹ Free Speech Coalition, *Age Verification Bill Tracker* (2025), <https://action.freespeechcoalition.com/age-verification-bills/>.
- ² Amanda Giordano et al., *Pornography Use and Sexting Trends Among American Adolescents: Data to Inform School Counseling Programming and Practice*, (Oct. 31, 2022), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2156759X221137287>.
- ³ USCCB, *Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography*, (2015), <https://www.usccb.org/resources/Create-in-Me-a-Clean-Heart-Statement-on-Pornography.pdf>
- ⁴ *Free Speech Coalition v. Paxton: Brief of Amici Curiae from Major Religious Organizations Supporting Respondent and Affirmance*, p. 23 (Nov. 2024), https://www.usccb.org/resources/FSCvPaxton_FINAL.pdf.
- ⁵ *Id.* at 24.
- ⁶ *Id.* at 26.
- ⁷ Hasseeb Qadri et al., *Physiological, Psychosocial and Substance Abuse Effects of Pornography Addiction: A Narrative Review*, (Jan. 12, 2023), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9922938/>.
- ⁸ *Id.*
- ⁹ *Id.*
- ¹⁰ UNICEF, *Protection of children from the harmful impacts of pornography*, <https://www.unicef.org/harmful-content-online>.
- ¹¹ Mary Sharpe and Darryl Mead, *Problematic Pornography Use: Legal and Health Policy Considerations*, (Sept. 9, 2021), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8426110/>.
- ¹² *Id.*
- ¹³ Surobhi Chatterjee and Sujitia Kumar Kar, *Teen Pornography: An Emerging Mental Health Challenge*, (Mar. 9 2023), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/26318318231154230>.
- ¹⁴ *Free Speech Coalition v. Paxton* (June 27, 2025) https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/24pdf/23-1122_3e04.pdf



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WISCONSIN FAMILY COUNCIL
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Testimony on SB 130
October 8, 2025

Good morning, Chair and members of the committee. My name is Jeremy Thompson, and I serve as the Director of the Church Ambassador Network in Wisconsin. Our network connects pastors, who are the shepherds of the church, with the shepherds of government—leaders such as yourselves. We greatly appreciate your service on behalf of our state, and it is our heart to minister to you as a person, a shepherd, and a partner. Our goal is that governing authorities would see who they are as image bearers of God and servants of God, and that they would view churches and parachurch ministries as a primary resource to help meet community needs.

Protecting youth from pornography is deeply personal to me. Before this role, I spent several years as a youth pastor and many more as a pastor. I witnessed firsthand the devastating impact pornography can have on young people, marriages, and families. I've walked alongside individuals desperate to break free and spouses who felt betrayed and broken. Those experiences make me deeply concerned about how easily pornography reaches our children today.

Teenagers now grow up in a world where pornography is nearly unavoidable. With smartphones in almost every pocket, exposure is common. By age eleven, more than half of kids own a smartphone, and nearly eight in ten teenagers have seen pornography, often accidentally. Most parents aren't even aware it has happened.

Early exposure matters because adolescent brains are still developing. Teen brains are highly sensitive to dopamine—the chemical that drives pleasure and reward. Pornography floods that system with intense stimulation, rewiring reward pathways and making real experiences feel dull. Over time, this can lead to compulsive use. The World Health Organization now recognizes compulsive sexual behavior, including problematic pornography use, as a diagnosable disorder.

The harm isn't only neurological—it's moral, relational, and emotional. Pornography teaches distorted lessons about sex, love, and respect at a critical age. Nearly half of pornographic videos contain physical aggression, and most include verbal aggression—often toward women. Teens can begin to believe that sex is about domination, not love; performance, not partnership.

These lessons carry into adulthood. Early exposure increases the risk of isolation, insecurity, relationship problems, and in marriage, regular pornography use doubles the likelihood of separation or divorce. It also affects mental health, contributing to anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

Pornography is not harmless entertainment—it's a powerful teacher shaping young minds, relationships, and futures before they can discern truth from fiction.

Thank you for your attention and concern for Wisconsin's youth. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and a pastor from your district—or a pastor specializing in this issue—to review a White Paper our organization has prepared. It outlines the devastating impact of pornography, biblical principles on bondage and addiction, and ways the legislative branch can help protect the next generation.

In addition, regular consumption of online pornography has been associated with a higher likelihood of negative mental health effects in young adults. Research indicates that nearly one in three young adults (32%) who view pornography daily report frequent feelings of sadness, depression, or hopelessness, whereas only 19% of those who seldom or never engage with pornography report experiencing these emotions.⁴

While I could continue to cite statistics to you about how pornography is detrimental to mental health, I want to instead share a personal story of Rachel Robison. In her preteens, Rachel was diagnosed with anxiety and depression. She also struggled with an eating disorder starting from the age of 12 and lasting until she was 20. Rachel says, "The mental health issues I was facing were rooted directly in my pornography addiction. Porn stole my innocence and polluted my mind, creating a dark reality that almost took my life."⁵ I encourage you all to read more about Rachel's journey as her story is far too symbolic of the many battles our kids with pornography addictions face today.

Second, I'd like to address concerns some may raise about the constitutionality of age-verification requirements. The federal Supreme Court has determined on multiple occasions that the government has a compelling interest to protect children from obscene content including in cases such as *Ginsberg v. New York*.

As technology has evolved, new opportunities to enable such protection has emerged. You may be aware that this summer the federal Supreme Court ruled on a similar law passed in Texas. (*Free Speech Coalition v. Paxton*)

We were confident that the Court would rule in favor of age verification laws and indeed they did with the majority stating that, "The power to require age verification is within a State's authority to prevent children from accessing sexually explicit content. H. B. 1181 is a constitutionally permissible exercise of that authority."

Finally, I would like to talk about the technological aspects of this bill and its relation to data privacy.

Age verification in a digital space is a growing industry, and technology is catching up to the need this is presenting in our current world. The Legislature must grapple with the fact that we have age verification in the physical world, and this age verification must be extended to the digital world. From rental cars, to banking and cryptocurrency, to pharmaceutical products, and more, age verification is necessary for all kinds of products and services.

Examples of companies providing online age verification services include:

- Yoti, which currently partners with Instagram, estimates the age of the user based on facial features through a video selfie which is deleted upon confirmation of age. Yoti has a roughly 99 percent positive rate for correct estimations.⁶

⁴ Wang, Wendy and Michael Toscano. "Frequent Porn Use Is Linked to Negative Mental Health Among Gen-Z and Millennials." Institute for Family Studies. <https://ifstudies.org/blog/frequent-porn-use-is-linked-to-negative-mental-health-among-gen-z-and-millennials>

⁵ Kamman, Samantha. "'Porn Stole My Innocence': How Pornography Exposure Conditioned Abuse, Self-Harm of Teenage Girl." The Christian Post, January 21, 2025. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/how-porn-conditioned-abuse-self-harm-in-mind-of-teenage-girl.html>

⁶ "Yoti Age Estimation," Yoti, May 2022, <https://www.yoti.com/wp-content/uploads/Yoti-Age-Estimation-White-Paper-Executive-Summary-May-2022.pdf>



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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 130 AND ASSEMBLY BILL 105
SENATE COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION, AND
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER, 8, 2025**

Thank you, Chairman James and committee members, for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 130 and Assembly Bill 105. I am Sam Krebs, Legislative and Policy Director for Wisconsin Family Action. Wisconsin Family Action supports the intent of these bills to require adult content websites to age verify their visitors.

I would like to note this bill has received strong bipartisan support, and we hope that this committee will also see the value in moving forward this common-sense legislation which will be greatly beneficial to families.

I want to touch on three specific items relating to these bills. These items include the harms of pornography especially for young people, the legal status of similar legislation which has been enacted in 25 states so far, and finally the aspect of data privacy relating to this particular bill.

First, the harms of pornography have been linked to mental health problems as well as sexual violence. Shockingly, or maybe not so shockingly in our digital society, the majority of kids have been exposed to porn by age 13.¹ Fast forward to just before the age of 18, and 93% of boys and 63% of girls report being exposed to internet pornography.

Exposure at such a young age has severe consequences.

Society at times seems oblivious that kids are viewing porn and rationalize that if they are seeing porn, it's not that big a deal. Sadly, we couldn't be more wrong about this silent epidemic. The pornography children regularly view right now is increasingly graphic, violent, and extreme. One study found that 88% of scenes in popular pornography videos involved physical aggression and 49% contained verbal aggression.²

Heidi Olson, a Certified Pediatric Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) who has reviewed thousands of pediatric sexual assault cases, says, "Research and anecdotal evidence show that many kids with problematic sexual behavior have been viewing online pornography."³

¹ Fight the New Drug. "What's the Average Age of a Child's First Exposure to Porn?" May 23, 2023. <https://fightthenewdrug.org/real-average-age-of-first-exposure/>

²Bridges AJ, Wosnitzer R, Scharrer E, Sun C, Liberman R. Aggression and sexual behavior in best-selling pornography videos: a content analysis update. *Violence Against Women*. 2010 Oct;16(10):1065-85. doi: 10.1177/1077801210382866. PMID: 20980228. <http://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20980228/>

³ Culture Reframed. "The Influence of Pornography on Child Sexual Assault." January 15, 2024. <https://culturereframed.org/the-influence-of-pornography-on-child-sexual-assault/>

- FaceTec uses biometrics through face identification in a short video to perform age or ID verification creating a 3D map of an individual's face with a two-second video. As an example of their confidence in accuracy, the company will pay a \$600,000 bounty to testers who fool the system. The Department of Homeland Security and several international banks are among its users.⁷
- InCode is another company which provides age verification services boasting a three second average verification time from start to finish, 99% accuracy when identifying minors (ages 6-17), and the ability to verify age without storing personal information returning age check results (over/under a threshold) while still meeting auditing requirements.

This is just a small sampling of companies that stake their reputation and business model on being accurate, safe, and secure.

In addition, Wisconsin Family Action recognizes that data deletion is crucial for maintaining privacy while also discouraging bad actors. That is why this bill mandates that those who conduct the age verification will not retain any identifying information of individuals being vetted.

Wisconsin Family Action believes the Legislature has an interest in preventing minors from being exposed to explicit and often violent material which can harm their mental health, distort their understanding of relationships, and increase the risk of developing damaging, addictive behaviors.

Enacting age verification measures through Senate Bill 130/Assembly Bill 105 is a common-sense, legally sound approach to shielding minors from the well-documented dangers of pornography.

Thank you for your attention and thoughtful consideration on this proposal.

⁷ "Clients and Partners," FaceTec, <https://www.facetec.com/#page-blk-clients-and-partners>

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Mike Stabile and I am the Director of Public Policy at the Free Speech Coalition, the trade and advocacy organization for the adult industry. We believe that age-verification is critical to prevent minors from encountering adult content online, and believe we can help inform the fight in Wisconsin.

Unfortunately, we fear that as it is currently written, SB-130 will be largely ineffective, just as similar bills have proven to be in other states. Since the first age-verification bill went into effect almost three years ago, we've learned a lot about what works and what doesn't, and the unintended consequences of bad legislation. We've also learned that there are effective solutions to this issue and are eager to work with you to craft legislation that will keep minors from accessing such material online.

Laws like SB-130 which rely on verification at the platform or website level are shockingly easy to evade. In states that have passed similar laws, the vast, vast majority of visitors simply disguise their location using a VPN, use an easily generated fake ID, or go to one of the thousands of foreign sites not complying with US law.¹²

Just last week, North Dakota Governor Kelly Armstrong told journalists that the age-verification law he signed earlier this year doesn't work. "It's almost impossible to effectively implement because of the vastness [of the internet]. Sure, Pornhub isn't on in North Dakota right now, that doesn't mean 700 other sites aren't."³

Unfortunately, it's not just that they're ineffective. Age-verification protocols like the ones required by SB-130 have fueled explosive growth in non-compliant sites, including sites that may host illegal content such as revenge porn and CSAM.⁴ Research has confirmed that, in states that have enacted age-verification laws, visitors simply shift from legal, compliant sites to non-complaint sites overseas.⁵ The International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, a leader in child protection, has warned that platform-based age-verification may make things worse and, "inadvertently drive children towards more dangerous online environments, both on the clear and dark web."⁶

¹ VPNMentor Cybersecurity and Research Lab (2025). "Age-Verification and the Risks of VPNs," VPNMentor. <https://www.vpnmentor.com/news/vpn-and-adult-sites-report/>

² Ogles, Jacob. "Florida Demand for Vpns Surges by 1,150% after Pornhub Bans Access." *Florida Politics*, 23 Jan. 2025, [floridapolitics.com/archives/717229-florida-demand-for-vpns-surges-by-1150-after-pornhub-bans-access/](https://www.floridapolitics.com/archives/717229-florida-demand-for-vpns-surges-by-1150-after-pornhub-bans-access/).

³ Port, Rob. "We Should Care If the Laws We Pass Actually Work," *InForum*, 30 September 2025. <https://www.inforum.com/opinion/columns/port-we-should-care-if-the-laws-we-pass-actually-work>

⁴ Stabile, M. (2024). The Real Effect of Age-Verification Laws. [AgeVerificationPolicy.org](https://www.ageverificationpolicy.org)

⁵ Iovine, Anna. "Do Age-Verification Laws Work? Not According to this NYU Study," *Mashable*, March 6, 2025.

⁶ International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children. "Statement on Age Verification." Press release, 27 June 2024. <https://www.icmec.org/press/statement-on-age-verification>.

An Effective Age-Verification Solution

Age-verification will never be effective unless it encourages consumer compliance. Given the easy access to foreign sites and the availability of adult content on social media sites like X, Reddit and Discord, more than 90% of visitors simply leave a compliant site when asked to scan their face and upload ID to access sensitive content.⁷ Despite the privacy promises of the age-verification industry, consumers aren't buying it.

Instead, those who want to access an age-restricted site simply use a VPN, or virtual private network, to make it appear that they are logging in from a state or country without such requirements. This is now commonplace technology. 50% of Gen Z says they have used a VPN to access restricted websites or apps — even 41% of middle schoolers say they've used a VPN.⁸⁹

The more effective solution is to perform age-verification on the device itself. Verification only has to happen once and the sensitive biometrics and personal data are never transmitted outside the device. It merely communicates to each website whether a visitor is old enough to view it. Minors are blocked, while adults are freely able to access legal, compliant sites.

In November, Missouri will become the first state to enact device-based verification. Several other states, including Michigan, Illinois and New York are considering similar bills. Device-based protocols have significant advantages over platform-based solutions. Because the process is less invasive and risky, consumers have no need to seek out non-compliant sites, limiting the growth of illegal markets. Minors' devices are blocked regardless of whether or not they use a VPN.

If your goal is to keep minors from accessing adult content, Free Speech Coalition is willing and enthusiastic to work with you. We understand the technology, the consumer landscape, and the practical solutions that can keep minors from encountering adult material while preserving the safety and privacy of Wisconsinites. We understand that working with the adult industry may seem unorthodox, but any effective regulation requires industry to be at the table.

Over the past three years, we've watched as bills like SB-130 have failed to prevent minors from accessing adult content. We've watched the consumer traffic shift from legal, compliant sites to non-compliant sites overseas. We've watched interest in VPNs soar. And we've watched as our

⁷ Stabile, M. (2024). The Real Effect of Age-Verification Laws. AgeVerificationPolicy.org

⁸ Robb, Michael B., and Supreet Mann. "Teens and Pornography". Common Sense Media, 10 January 2023. <https://www.common sense media.org/research/teens-and-pornography>.

⁹ Mildner, Dasha. "CNET Survey: 47% of Americans Use VPNs for Privacy." CNET, 19 September 2025 <https://www.cnet.com/tech/services-and-software/vpn-survey-2025>

members, attempting to do the right thing, have seen their users migrate to more dangerous parts of the web.

We look forward to continuing this conversation.

Sincerely,
Michael Stabile
Director of Public Policy
mike@freespeechcoalition.com