

HB – 2277 – Proponent Testimony of Phillip Cosby, American Family Action of Kansas
and Missouri. February 2014

Chairman Barker and honorable members of the House Judiciary Committee I stand to speak in support of HB 2277 the Children's Protection Registry, the parental option of blocking materials harmful to minors.

The sexualization of our culture and early sexualization of children is pervasive. Hardees sell hamburgers with sex during episodes of Dora the Explorer. Sex sells. The attention and distraction it commands is burdensome, not only as a health and public safety concern but interference to good instruction and character formation. The commercial grooming and early loss of our children's innocence is beyond worrisome, it is harmful.

Our Kansas law (KSA 21-6402) of commercial promotion of materials harmful to children is not unique. We are in agreement that materials such as tobacco, alcohol, drugs, pornography / obscenity, gaming are not nurturing products but harmful.

There is little disagreement about the formative years and reasonable protections. Based in age we rate TV shows, rate movies, age of drivers license, age to vote, tobacco use, alcohol, gambling, and the list goes on. This is common sense,

Suggestive and eroticized advertisements during prime time interlaced with family entertainment such as the Super bowl have become commonplace. (Think Go Daddy, Viarga, Hardees, Ashley Madison , etc...) It is numbing to consider the volume of materials pandered via cyber technology, which are harmful to children.

I speak to hundreds of parents each year addressing cyber safety concerns and protecting their children from materials that are harmful on the Internet. I talk of the "why" of protecting children but also the basics of "how" as we walk through;

- The filtering of the Internet by setting on line configurations at the Internet Service Provider (ISP) level, (Cox, Direct TV, Verizon, ATT, Sprint, etc...)
- The configuring of the settings within their wireless or cable routers inside their home, (which almost always requires a technician to visit the home)
- The instillation of blocking and monitoring filters on their computers and mobile devices (ipads, smart phones) discussing which products and prices?
- The built in safety settings on each device (Android, Windows, iphone.)

Parents are overwhelmed and intimidated by technology. Even if they do all these blocking measures the constantly morphing applications and technologies still persist in breaching these efforts. Parents could use a little help here with the mechanical parental controls as they focus on parental guidance.

Last legislative session you and the KNEA did agree that the filtering of K-12 school computers from harmful materials was good public policy. This bill is that spirit.

This is an innovative opportunity to put on notice to commercial interests that we take the formation of our youth seriously. Tobacco and alcohol billboard advertisements along our nations highways have long been restricted for this very reason of the impact on impressionable youth.

Here are the pluses:

- It is a market-based solution for a governmental concern (harms to children).
- It does not grow government, like the “no call” list, written warnings will usually yield compliance.
- It is administered by a contracted company, not a bureaucracy.
- It generates revenue for the state and does not tax the family.
- It is optional for parents and anyone who might want this service.
- It is not the “silver bullet” for all concerns but it is the right direction.
- It is a ‘double blind’ system that protects the client.
- It serves to protect children and families from harmful materials.
- The ‘Dutch boy’ effect inspires others and demonstrates leadership.

PM Cameron and the British Parliament are engaged in enacting cyber solutions due to child on child crime as they reenact sexually violent scenes. Iceland likewise.

Some commercial interests have no boundaries regarding content or age of the recipient. They oppose and seek to discredit any effort at limitations. Kansas’s families deserve and would welcome this service and protection.

This is about leadership, and innovative solutions. Please protect families and encourage ground-breaking market solutions to governmental concerns. Please vote to support HB 2277, the Children’s Protection Registry.

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