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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 549

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Recognizing pornography as a public health hazard leading to a broad spectrum of individual and public health impacts and societal harms.

Patrons—Marshall, R.G., Edmunds, Fowler, Helsel, Kory, Landes, LaRock and Pogge

Referred to Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

WHEREAS, pornography is creating a public health crisis; and
WHEREAS, pornography perpetuates a sexually toxic environment; and
WHEREAS, efforts to prevent pornography exposure and addiction, to educate individuals and families concerning its harms, and to develop recovery programs must be addressed systemically in ways that hold broader influences accountable; and
WHEREAS, pornography is contributing to the hypersexualization of teenagers, and even prepubescent children, in our society; and
WHEREAS, owing to advances in technology and the universal availability of the Internet, young children are exposed to what used to be referred to as hardcore, but is now considered mainstream, pornography at an alarming rate; and
WHEREAS, the average age of exposure to pornography is now 11 to 12 years of age; and
WHEREAS, this early exposure is leading to low self-esteem and body image disorders, an increase in problematic sexual activity at younger ages, and an increased desire among adolescents to engage in risky sexual behavior; and
WHEREAS, exposure to pornography often serves as children's and youths' sex education and shapes their sexual templates; and
WHEREAS, because pornography treats women as objects and commodities for the viewer's use, it teaches girls that they are to be used and teaches boys to be users; and
WHEREAS, pornography normalizes violence and abuse of women and children; and
WHEREAS, pornography treats women and children as objects and often depicts rape and abuse as if such acts are harmless; and
WHEREAS, pornography equates violence toward women and children with sex and pain with pleasure, which increases the demand for sex trafficking, prostitution, images of child sexual abuse, and child pornography; and
WHEREAS, use of pornography can potentially negatively affect brain development and functioning, contribute to emotional and medical illnesses, shape deviant sexual arousal, and lead to difficulty in forming or maintaining intimate relationships as well as problematic or harmful sexual behaviors and addiction; and
WHEREAS, use of pornography, by either partner, is linked to an increased likelihood that girls will engage in group intercourse; and
WHEREAS, recent research indicates that pornography is potentially biologically addictive, which means the user requires more novelty, often in the form of more shocking material, in order to be satisfied; and
WHEREAS, this biological addiction leads to increasing themes of risky sexual behaviors, extreme degradation, violence, child sexual abuse, and child pornography; and
WHEREAS, pornography use is linked to lessening desire in young men to marry, dissatisfaction in marriage, and infidelity; and
WHEREAS, this link demonstrates that pornography has a detrimental effect on the family unit; and
WHEREAS, overcoming pornography's harms is beyond the capability of the afflicted individual to address alone; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly recognize pornography as a public health hazard leading to a broad spectrum of individual and public health impacts and societal harms; and, be it
RESOLVED FURTHER, That the General Assembly recognize the need for education, prevention, research, and policy change at the community and societal level in order to address the pornography epidemic that is harming the people of the Commonwealth and the nation.

INTRODUCED

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