

# Testimony in Support of Senate Joint Resolution 1

Maryland State Senate, Judicial Proceedings Committee

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Good afternoon. I am here to urge that you support Senate Joint Resolution 1, to declare that the exposure of minors to pornography is a public health hazard within our state.

I could recount for you the extensive body of research regarding the harms of pornography, but that is probably unnecessary. The [text of the resolution](#) itself does that quite succinctly.

To understand the harms of pornography, we need look no further than today's newspaper. [Larry Nassar](#), a former doctor to the U.S. women's gymnastics team, has listened in open court, on national television, to victim impact statements from over 100 of the estimated 300 young women he sexually assaulted. Last month, however, Nassar was [already sentenced](#) to 60 years in federal prison—on child pornography charges.

Carlos DeAngelo Bell, a former track coach and instructional aide at a middle school in Charles County, Maryland, also [pled guilty yesterday](#) in federal court to child pornography charges. Bell already pled guilty in a Maryland state court to “26 . . . child sex charges involving 42 victims between the ages of 11 and 17.”

Although these cases may be extreme, they are hardly unique. And the harms of pornography are not limited to child pornography. As the resolution states, exposure to any pornography is “a risk factor for . . . sexual offenses and sexually aggressive behavior”—by minors, as well as by adults.

Pornographers today compete to show ever more extreme behavior. As the resolution states, 42% of males exposed to pornography have “viewed pornography that depicted violence against women.” I once heard a report from a former law enforcement officer who had investigated pornography that was available on pay-per-view in hotel rooms. Just the *titles* of the pornographic films that he found were available were so disgusting that I would not repeat them here.

We are at a historic moment, when the #MeToo movement has exposed a seeming epidemic of sexual harassment and sexual assault. To put it bluntly, many people are asking, “Where did men learn to be such pigs?” One answer, most likely, is simple—they learned it from pornography.

How can this resolution change anything? Let me suggest one possibility. I served for six years as a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee on Family Life and Human Development for the Montgomery County Public Schools. Passage of this resolution might provide strong impetus for public schools in our state to include warnings about the potential harms of pornography in their sex education curriculum.

That alone would make this resolution worthy of your support.