



SB 1050: PFSA Testimony

Introduction:

Good afternoon. I would like to thank Chairman Argall and the Majority Policy Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of SB 1050.

Mandated Reporter Training Experience:

Pa Family Support Alliance has been a highly valued and integral part of Pennsylvania's child protection system since 1979. The foundation of our organization was built on the belief that the best, first step in preventing child abuse and neglect is consistent positive parenting. To that end, in partnership with the Pa. Dept. of Human Services, PFSA supports efforts of community-based agencies statewide by providing education and support programs designed to help moms, dads and anyone in a parenting role give their best so children are raised free from maltreatment.

Sadly, we know a percentage of parents are unable to provide safe and nurturing environments for their children due to a myriad of reasons. As a result, our state's Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) addresses the requirement for specific professionals and volunteers who work with children to report suspected child abuse. Since 1996, PFSA has been at the forefront of training and interacting with mandated reporters. We developed the first statewide training curriculum, championed public funding to make training available for all mandated reporters, and collaborated with members of legislative leadership to make sweeping changes to our child protection law on the heels of the Sandusky scandal.

PFSA administers a robust, comprehensive training program funded by federal Child Abuse Treatment Act dollars through a contract with DHS. Our training is approved by Pa. Dept. of Human Services, Education and State. Training is provided in person and virtually, by trainers who are experts on Pa's child welfare system and the CPSL; their extensive knowledge is unmatched as our trainers have worked for decades in County, State, and Federal child welfare positions. PFSA provides advanced curricula beyond the basic state requirement core course "Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse" and has the distinction of being the only provider to conduct Pennsylvania specific evaluation on training mandated reporters through Johns Hopkins and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Over the years, PFSA has paid close attention to changes in our societal environment and developed specialized training curricula to address the associated challenges for mandated reporters. Children born during the pandemic were the first generation to move seamlessly between the virtual and real world. This has brought indescribable challenges to parents, caregivers, and mandated reporters alike.



Implications of AI Technology & CSAM

The facilitation of child sexual abuse material looks very different today than it did in the past. Just a few years ago, creating or distributing child sexual abuse material required access, opportunity, and time. Today, artificial intelligence (AI) has erased those barriers. With a few keystrokes and prompts, realistic sexualized images of children – many of which are indistinguishable from real photographs – can be generated in just seconds. These images might be synthetic, but the harm they inflict is undoubtedly real.

Victims whose photos and likeness are used unknowingly experience deep emotional trauma. Just last month, a Pennsylvania man pleaded guilty to having AI-generated child sex abuse material, in which case he took photos that he saw on social media and altered them to make two girls (whom he knew) appear without any clothes. This was one of the state's first convictions for a crime like this, but sadly it will not be the last. The Internet Watch Foundation recently reported thousands of AI-generated child sexual abuse images, warning of a “sharp and alarming rise” in both volume and realism. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children has already logged thousands of CyberTipline reports related to generative AI, confirming that this is not a future concern, it's a current crisis.

What makes this moment of concern different than in the past is the nature of the technology itself. Unlike social media, which can effectively facilitate harm, generative AI can create it. In other words, it doesn't just spread exploitation, it can manufacture and distribute it repeatedly and anonymously. This blurring of reality and fabrication make it nearly impossible to tell which images depict real children and which are synthetic, yet both normalize abuse and feed the demand for it at the expense of our children. Meanwhile, schools are becoming a flashpoint for this issue. Deepfake and “nudify” tools are being used by students to target peers as well as teachers and staff, and many districts remain unequipped to respond and address this growing concern.

To be clear, as we sit here today, AI can quickly and effortlessly produce imagery, voices, and identities that never existed in real life. It can also simulate the images, voices, and identities of real people – of children – in a shockingly realistic and convincing manner. This technological evolution forces us to confront a new moral reality: the line between imagination and violation has been blurred.

Child Protective Services

Pennsylvania has taken actionable steps to begin addressing this challenge. Act 125 of 2024 amended Section 6312 of Title 18 of the Pennsylvania Crimes Code—Sexual Abuse of Children—to include AI-generated child sexual abuse material, or CSAM. This legislation was enacted in response to an incident at Lancaster Country Day School, where school personnel failed to report AI-generated sexual abuse material that had been created to resemble actual students.



Initially, the Lancaster County District Attorney stated that no legal action could be taken because existing laws did not address AI-generated content. Later, in December 2024, two male students were charged for creating the material. However, no charges were filed against school staff for failing to report the incident to ChildLine as suspected child abuse.

Because the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) definition of “sexual abuse and exploitation” includes violations under Section 6312 of Title 18 of the Pennsylvania Crimes Code, Act 125 also made AI-generated CSAM a form of child abuse that can now be investigated by County Children and Youth Agencies. This also means that mandated reporters in Pennsylvania are now required to report any suspected instance of AI-generated CSAM to ChildLine.

Unfortunately, many mandated reporters remain unaware that AI-generated CSAM is now a required report. Senate Bill 1050 seeks to address this by explicitly clarifying in the CPSL that any knowledge or reasonable suspicion of AI being used to create CSAM must be reported immediately to ChildLine, even if the situation does not meet other components of child abuse outlined in the law. By adding this clarification to the CPSL, we can ensure that all suspected cases of AI-generated CSAM are reported and investigated.

We applaud the efforts of Senators Pennycuik, Baker, Martin as well as the Senate Communications & Technology Committee and the Senate Majority Policy Committee related to SB 1050. No child should ever experience the violation of having their image exploited, shared, or used as a weapon. Our children deserve the safeguards of stronger legislation aimed at protecting them and professionally trained mandated reporters who know how to respond when incidents of AI generated CSAM occurs. This legislation is not about technology; it's about accountability, safety, and ensuring that every child in Pennsylvania is protected from this emerging form of abuse and exploitation.