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McArthur

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Dear Members of The Children's Committee,

Thank you so much for making this time available for us to make a plea on behalf of all children in Connecticut. Your immediate attention regarding this serious matter gives us hope, and is greatly appreciated. We are here today to state our testimony. We feel it is of grave importance that we protect Connecticut's children against the abuses that can occur by exposing our children to newspaper print without proper legislation in place. As much as we would like to see the Internet monitored, newspapers are a wonderful first step in protecting Connecticut's children.

In the past five years, there have been many events that have led up to our desperate attempts to get a law passed to protect all children from the dangers of the Internet that we have experienced first hand. We are coming to you first to start by protecting Connecticut's children against the same dangers that can occur in print, as well.

The following is a brief description of what has happened to us and is still happening in our lives:

B:11- SB 544

- In August of 2006, a local newspaper published a picture of our daughter with identifying information, including her first and last name. Shortly after this picture was published, we received a package and mail at our home from estranged family members. We took every measure to move as far away from these people as possible.
- In September of 2006, the head of our daughter's school discovered a website in our daughter's name that posted over 40 <sup>pics</sup> pictures of our daughter, including personal information such as; her first and last name, where she resided, and many of her hobbies, to name a few.
- The creators of this website are the estranged family members mentioned previously, who have wanted to get our daughter's attention.
- Out of fear, we have changed our own behavior and went to extreme measures to protect our daughter.
- Unfortunately, our requests to these estranged family members to remove the website were ignored.
- We sought protection under The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), which forbids the posting of any personal information including photographs of minors under the age of 13, without the written consent of the parents or legal guardians. Unfortunately, we discovered that COPPA only applies to commercial websites not personal ones.

- With our legal counsel, we were able to shut down the original website only to have seven additional websites be created, in addition to, an extensive blog on MySpace.
- Consequently, several of the newly created websites were linked to pornographic websites.

We currently have a permanent injunction that clearly states that no websites, pictures, personal information, including first and last name, social security number, and any other identifying information, must cease from being used by the defendants in any way.

Members of the Committee, this is not a family matter. In fact, this is an outright violation of privacy. We have been forced to spend money that we do not have on legal fees and travel, to another state, in order to defend ourselves against these defendants and their egregious acts. To get this permanent injunction, we have had to go to extreme measures.

Our family is currently living in fear knowing that personal information has already been made available on the Internet to all sorts of criminals and sexual predators. As citizens of the United States, we believe that our family has the right to privacy and to peace of mind. Our rights have been violated over and over again, not to mention, the destruction of the quality of life, which we have sought to enjoy, as a family.

Our little girl cannot have a normal childhood because we are constantly living in the fear that someone might take her or lure her in some perverted way. We have to monitor all of her friendships, since we cannot divulge the details of this case, as this could jeopardize our daughter's safety. This case has also greatly affected our daughter insomuch as she is not afforded the freedoms that a 9-year-old girl should have. For example, she cannot be released with her friends at the end of the school day. She cannot play on the playground without having to be watched 100% of the time. She cannot ride her bike up the street. She cannot even sell lemonade on the corner with her friends, and so much more. We feel she is the biggest loser here because of all the things she is missing out on as a result of the dangers that the defendants have intentionally subjected her and our family to.

It is our hope that your Committee will be able to start the process of getting a law passed which would clearly make it illegal for anyone to post pictures of a minor and/or his/her personal information (including first and last names) in any type of media, eventually including personal websites regardless of the relationship to child, without prior permission from the parent(s) or legal guardian(s). In addition, as it states in the COPPA Act, it should also be illegal to solicit a minor without the permission of the parent/legal guardian.

Without such a law, anyone can take a photograph of a child in a park and post his/her picture on the Internet or anywhere else for that matter, with the child's information, and

it is perfectly legal. It is shocking to think that there has not been a law in place already protecting all children from these possibly perverted acts.

It is our understanding that the proposed Bill # 544 will deal with Connecticut newspapers only. This is a wonderful beginning to the process that we will need to go through in order to protect children from the very real dangers that exist in our society. This law is the first step to Federal Legislation that we are trying to accomplish.

Members of the Children's Committee, we are asking for your help in getting the proposed Bill passed so that our children will not become victims or fall prey to the evils that lurk in our world today. In addition, this law would deter anyone from putting a child and his/her family in a position that our family was put in to. Newspapers are a great place to start.

Thank you all again, for your time and consideration in this very serious matter.