



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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Testimony of Michelle Cruz, Esq., State Victim Advocate
Judiciary Committee
Monday, March 22, 2010

Good morning Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. For the record, my name is Michelle Cruz and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **OPPOSITION** of:

Raised House Bill No. 5533 *An Act Concerning Sexting*

Remember the days of Polaroid cameras, calculators and land line telephones; seems so long ago. Unfortunately, as the advancements in technology progress through our lifetime, so do those individuals who use that technology to commit crimes. In response to this criminal behavior, the statutes must be continually updated to reflect these advancements; the statutes regarding mandated reporters of child abuse are a prime example. Raised House Bill No. 5533 will establish a criminal offense for anyone between the ages of 13-17 for possessing child pornography, also commonly referred to as "Sexting". The OVA understands the need to address this troubling issue. However, rather than expose children to the criminal justice system, as young as 13, I believe the issue could be better addressed through education. The spirit and intent behind our states pornography statutes was not to penalize children who, in their infinite wisdom, decided to text their girlfriend or boyfriend, a nude or partially naked photograph of themselves. The purpose of the pornography statutes was, rather, to protect our children.

As any parent would tell you, children will often do things, say things and respond to things without much thought. Many people were blind to the problem of sexual predators using the internet to entice minors for sexual purposes. It really wasn't until the highly publicized television series; "To Catch a Predator", did people grasp the intensity of the problem. Further, websites such as myspace and facebook have shed more light on this growing issue. We have seen difficulties with trying to regulate those types of internet services and I think we will see similar difficulties ahead should this proposal move forward. I urge the committee to instead support funding for educational efforts to address this issue rather than spending even more money on a defense for the children that will be the subject of a criminal prosecution.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Cruz, Esq.
State Victim Advocate