



Honorable Matt Grossell
227 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

April 07, 2022

Dear Representative Grossell,

I am writing on behalf of the Minnesota Catholic Conference to thank you for authoring two bills related to criminal sentencing for possession and distribution of child pornography: H.F. 3881 and H.F. 3925.

Producing, viewing, or disseminating child pornography in any format is abhorrent behavior that should never be tolerated. We need to take steps to discourage this behavior to protect children and hold accountable those responsible for their exploitation. We cannot stand by and let predators off the hook while the children on which they prey suffer through traumatic effects.

According to the 2021 Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission Report, our state gives a penalty of probation for first-time child-sex offenders, as well as for those involved in possession, distribution, and production of child imagery. By contrast, comparable states (such as Washington and Kansas) more often impose a jail or prison sentence. The changes to the sentencing guidelines proposed by H.F. 3881 would strengthen the penalty for offenders by introducing modestly higher mandatory minimums. The bill would also add the category of “receipt” as disciplinary activity and make our law consistent with federal sentencing guidelines.

Coupled with H.F. 3925, which would increase the reasons for registering as a sex offender, the two bills combined will increase children’s safety against predators. Given the high rate of recidivism for possession of child imagery, individuals who engage in this dangerous behavior should not be let off with probation. There are countless stories of repeat offenders who were released too early and continue harming our children.

We recognize that some changes have been made to strengthen Minnesota sentencing guidelines, but critical reform remains to be done. Given the relatively small sub-group of offenders this law encompasses (less than 500 cases), the proposed legislation will not result in large increases in the incarceration rate but will more reasonably tailor the prison sentence to the crime.

We can build on past efforts to help ensure the safety of children and the just punishment of predatory criminals. To that end, we support H.F. 3881 and H.F. 3925. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Maggee Becker
Policy Associate, Minnesota Catholic Conference