

**Testimony of Alessandra Parisi Serano
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Nelson Mandela once said: There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.

The people who sexually exploit and abuse children must be held accountable, not only to society, but to their victims. Incarceration and sex offender registration are ways to hold these criminals responsible for their despicable acts. Child pornography (or child sexual abuse material or CSAM) is a horrific crime that plagues victims long after the initial sexual abuse.

My name is Alessandra Parisi Serano. I work on behalf of Operation Underground Railroad, a nonprofit that partners with governments here and around the world to help victims of human trafficking and child exploitation get the necessary after care and support they so desperately need. Operation Underground Railroad also helps train foreign law enforcement and other entities who may have contact with potential victims on how to identify, investigate and prosecute traffickers and exploiters of children. I recently joined this organization.

For the preceding 18 years, I served as a federal prosecutor with the U.S. Department of Justice. I have personally handled hundreds of child exploitation and human trafficking cases involving thousands of victims during my career. I have seen firsthand what these victims endure from the initial abuse, but also the continued abuse and exploitation that the consumption of CSAM causes them, their families and their communities for years to come. Often times, for the remainder of their lives. The Supreme Court in the *Paroline* case recognized this fact when it allowed victims depicted in CSAM to obtain mandatory restitution from voyeurs, distributors and transporters of CSAM long after the initial sexual abuse has occurred.

While the initial sexual abuse causes great harm for which many victims never overcome, CSAM retraumatizes victims for years after the abuse. Every time a person views the CSAM, that child is reexploited, retraumatized, and reabused. When an offender is caught viewing, downloading or distributing these horrific images, mandatory notice goes to the victim that yet another offender viewed the CSAM. Upon receiving these notices, victims relive the crime.

Persons who download, view, and distribute CSAM cause an increase in the production of CSAM images. No one wants to see "reruns" of movies or TV – we all experienced this during COVID when the release of new movies and TV shows stopped - and that includes voyeurs and distributors of CSAM. With this appetite for new material comes the increased demand for the abuse of younger kids in more violent, sadistic and masochistic images according to recent statistics. I personally prosecuted cases with images of the abuse and exploitation of children as young as premature infants.

The trend by certain judges to decrease sentences far below the advisory sentencing guidelines and prosecutor's recommendations for CSAM consumers minimizes the gravity of the offense. While the amount of material being produced and number of people consuming this material has increased exponentially over recent years, the sentences have decreased. This makes no sense. I live in Southern California where destructive wildfires are a yearly issue. The fires leave hundreds of victims in its wake. When the fires spread and get bigger, do we put less firefighters on the front line? Use less water or resources? Less containment measures? No, of course not. That scenario is akin to reducing sentences for CSAM consumers when the supply is undisputedly increasing. I say again, it makes no sense.

I hope all of the members of this committee agree that there is no cause more noble than protecting our children. Whether some crimes warrant long prison sentences is a debate left for another day. Purveyors of CSAM - especially those with prior conduct involving sexual abuse and exploitation- deserve to be taken out of society for a substantial period of time, and to be identified by the public through sex offender registries. It's been my experience that offenders are only remorseful because they got caught, and not because of what their deviant and destructive conduct has done to countless victims many of whom are unidentified.

The notion that CSAM crimes only involves "pictures" is appalling to most prosecutors and victim advocates. CSAM depicts real kids who deserve justice. These victims or survivors deserve our respect and dignity for what they endured. They do not deserve to be treated with less consideration than the offenders who take sexual pleasure in viewing CSAM of what is the darkest days of their lives. Our society is better than that. At least I hope it is. Our most precious resource, our children--deserve it.

For these reasons, I have serious concerns about any nominee with a record that does not conform with these principles.

I am available for questions. Thank you.