By:  Huffman, et al. S.B. No. 1621

(In the Senate - Filed February 25, 2025; February 28, 2025, read first time and referred to Committee on Criminal Justice; March 6, 2025, reported favorably by the following vote: Yeas 7, Nays 0; March 6, 2025, sent to printer.)

COMMITTEE VOTE

               Yea Nay Absent  PNV

Flores          X

Parker          X

Hagenbuch       X

Hinojosa of Hidalgo  X

Huffman         X

King            X

Miles           X

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to prosecution and punishment of certain criminal offenses prohibiting sexually explicit visual material involving depictions of children, computer-generated children, or other persons; creating criminal offenses; increasing criminal penalties.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Section 43.26, Penal Code, is amended by amending Subsections (a), (e), (g), and (h) and adding Subsections (a-1), (a-2), (c-1), (c-2), (c-3), (c-4), (e-1), (f), (g-1), (h-1), and (h-2) to read as follows:

(a)  In this section:

(1)  "Depiction of a child" means, with respect to an image of a child contained in visual material:

(A)  a depiction of a child who was younger than 18 years of age at the time the image of the child was made; or

(B)  a depiction of a child:

(i)  who is recognizable as an actual person by the person's face, likeness, or other distinguishing characteristic, such as a unique birthmark or other recognizable feature; and

(ii)  whose image as a child younger than 18 years of age was used in creating, adapting, or modifying the visual material, including computer-generated visual material that was created, adapted, or modified using an artificial intelligence application or other computer software.

(2)  "Depiction of a computer-generated child" means, with respect to an image of a child contained in visual material, a depiction:

(A)  appearing to be a child younger than 18 years of age;

(B)  created using an artificial intelligence application or other computer software; and

(C)  that to a reasonable person is virtually indistinguishable from an actual child younger than 18 years of age.

(3)  "Promote" and "sexual conduct" have the meanings assigned by Section 43.25.

(4)  "School library" means a library of a public or private primary or secondary school.

(5)  "Visual material" means:

(A)  any film, photograph, videotape, negative, or slide or any photographic reproduction that contains or incorporates in any manner any film, photograph, videotape, negative, or slide; or

(B)  any disk, diskette, or other physical medium, or a file in any digital format, that allows an image to be displayed on a computer or other video screen and any image transmitted to a computer or other video screen by telephone line, cable, satellite transmission, or other method.

(a-1)  A person commits an offense if:

(1)  the person intentionally or knowingly [~~or intentionally~~] possesses, or [~~knowingly or~~] intentionally or knowingly accesses with intent to view, visual material that contains a visual depiction of [~~visually depicts~~] a child [~~younger than 18 years of age at the time the image of the child was made who is~~] engaging in sexual conduct, including a depiction of a child engaging [~~who engages~~] in sexual conduct as a victim of an offense under Section 20A.02(a)(5), (6), (7), or (8); and

(2)  the person knows or should have known that the depiction [~~material depicts the child as~~] described by Subdivision (1) is of a child younger than 18 years of age at the time the image of the child was made.

(a-2)  A person commits an offense if the person:

(1)  intentionally or knowingly possesses, or intentionally or knowingly accesses with intent to view, visual material that contains a visual depiction of a computer-generated child engaging in sexual conduct; and

(2)  either:

(A)  knows or should have known that the depiction described by Subdivision (1) appears to be of a child younger than 18 years of age; or

(B)  believes that the depiction is of an actual child younger than 18 years of age at the time the image of the child was made.

(c-1)  An offense under Subsection (a-1) is a felony of the third degree, except that the offense is:

(1)  a felony of the second degree if it is shown on the trial of the offense that the actor:

(A)  has been previously convicted one time of an offense:

(i)  under this chapter; or

(ii)  described by Article 62.001(5), Code of Criminal Procedure; or

(B)  possesses visual material that contains 10 or more visual depictions of a child engaging in sexual conduct as described by Subsection (a-1)(1) but fewer than 50 such depictions;

(2)  a felony of the first degree if it is shown on the trial of the offense that the actor:

(A)  has been previously convicted two or more times of an offense, or any combination of offenses:

(i)  under this chapter; or

(ii)  described by Article 62.001(5), Code of Criminal Procedure; or

(B)  possesses visual material that contains:

(i)  50 or more visual depictions of a child engaging in sexual conduct as described by Subsection (a-1)(1); or

(ii)  a videotape or film that visually depicts conduct constituting an offense under Section 22.011(a)(2); or

(3)  a felony of the first degree punishable by imprisonment in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for life or for any term of not more than 99 years or less than 25 years if it is shown on the trial of the offense that:

(A)  at the time of the offense, the actor was:

(i)  an employee at a child-care facility or a residential child-care facility, as those terms are defined by Section 42.002, Human Resources Code;

(ii)  an employee at a residential treatment facility established under Section 221.056, Human Resources Code;

(iii)  an employee at a shelter or facility that serves youth and that receives state funds; or

(iv)  receiving state funds for the care of a child depicted by the visual material; or

(B)  the actor displayed the visual material or caused the visual material to be displayed in a school library.

(c-2)  If it is shown on the trial of an offense under Subsection (a-1) that the visual material contained a depiction of a child younger than 10 years of age at the time the image of the child was made engaging in sexual conduct as described by Section (a-1)(1):

(1)  an offense punishable under Subsection (c-1) as a felony of the second or third degree is increased to the next higher category of offense; or

(2)  the minimum term of confinement for an offense described for purposes of punishment by Subsection (c-1)(2) is increased to 15 years.

(c-3)  An offense under Subsection (a-2) is a state jail felony, except that the offense is:

(1)  a felony of the third degree if it is shown on the trial of the offense that the actor:

(A)  has been previously convicted one time of an offense:

(i)  under this chapter; or

(ii)  described by Article 62.001(5), Code of Criminal Procedure; or

(B)  possesses visual material that contains 10 or more visual depictions of a computer-generated child engaging in sexual conduct as described by Subsection (a-2)(1) but fewer than 50 such depictions;

(2)  a felony of the second degree if it is shown on the trial of the offense that the actor:

(A)  has been previously convicted two or more times of an offense, or any combination of offenses:

(i)  under this chapter; or

(ii)  described by Article 62.001(5), Code of Criminal Procedure; or

(B)  possesses visual material that contains 50 or more visual depictions of a computer-generated child engaging in sexual conduct as described by Subsection (a-2)(1); or

(3)  a felony of the second degree with a minimum term of imprisonment of 10 years if it is shown on the trial of the offense that:

(A)  at the time of the offense, the actor was an employee described by Subsection (c-1)(3)(A)(i), (ii), or (iii); or

(B)  the actor displayed the visual material or caused the visual material to be displayed in a school library.

(c-4)  If it is shown on the trial of an offense under Subsection (a-2) that the visual material contained a depiction of a computer-generated child who appears to be younger than 10 years of age and is engaging in sexual conduct as described by Subsection (a-2)(1), the punishment for the offense is increased to the punishment for the next higher category of offense, provided that the minimum term of imprisonment for an offense described for purposes of punishment by Subsection (c-3)(3) is 10 years.

(e)  A person commits an offense if:

(1)  the person intentionally or knowingly [~~or intentionally~~] promotes or possesses with intent to promote visual material described by Subsection (a-1)(1) [~~(a)(1)~~]; and

(2)  the person knows or should have known that the depiction [~~material depicts the child as~~] described by Subsection (a-1)(1) is of a child younger than 18 years of age at the time the image of the child was made [~~(a)(1)~~].

(e-1)  A person commits an offense if the person:

(1)  intentionally or knowingly promotes or possesses with intent to promote visual material described by Subsection (a-2)(1); and

(2)  either:

(A)  knows or should have known that the depiction described by Subsection (a-2)(1) appears to be of a child younger than 18 years of age; or

(B)  believes that the depiction is of an actual child younger than 18 years of age at the time the image of the child was made.

(f)  In the prosecution of an offense under Subsection (a-1) or (e):

(1)  the state is not required to prove the identity of the child in the depiction described by Subsection (a-1)(1); and

(2)  there is a rebuttable presumption that the depiction is of an actual child, as described by Subsection (a)(1)(A) or (B), and not of a computer-generated child, as described by Subsection (a)(2).

(g)  An offense under Subsection (e) is a felony of the second degree, except that the offense is:

(1)  a felony of the first degree if it is shown on the trial of the offense that the actor:

(A)  [~~person~~] has been previously convicted one or more times of an offense:

(i)  under this chapter; or

(ii)  described by Article 62.001(5), Code of Criminal Procedure;

(B)  promotes or possesses with intent to promote visual material that contains 10 or more visual depictions of a child engaging in sexual conduct as described by Subsection (a-1)(1) but fewer than 50 such depictions; or

(C)  promotes or possesses with intent to promote visual material that contains one or more visual depictions of a child who appears to be younger than 10 years of age and is engaging in sexual conduct as described by Subsection (a-1)(1); or

(2)  a felony of the first degree with a minimum term of imprisonment of 15 years if it is shown on the trial of the offense that the actor promotes or possesses with intent to promote visual material that contains:

(A)  50 or more visual depictions of a child engaging in sexual conduct as described by Subsection (a-1)(1); or

(B)  a videotape or film that visually depicts conduct constituting an offense under Section 22.011(a)(2) with respect to a depiction of a child [~~that subsection~~].

(g-1)  An offense under Subsection (e-1) is a felony of the third degree, except that the offense is:

(1)  a felony of the second degree if it is shown on the trial of the offense that the person:

(A)  has been previously convicted one or more times of an offense:

(i)  under this chapter; or

(ii)  described by Article 62.001(5), Code of Criminal Procedure;

(B)  promotes or possesses with intent to promote visual material that contains 10 or more visual depictions of a computer-generated child engaging in sexual conduct as described by Subsection (a-2)(1); or

(C)  promotes or possesses with intent to promote visual material that contains one or more visual depictions of a computer-generated child who appears to be younger than 10 years of age and is engaging in sexual conduct as described by Subsection (a-2)(1); or

(2)  a felony of the second degree with a minimum term of imprisonment of 10 years if it is shown on the trial of the offense that the person promotes or possesses with intent to promote visual material that contains 50 or more visual depictions of a computer-generated child engaging in sexual conduct as described by Subsection (a-2)(1).

(h)  It is a defense to prosecution under this section [~~Subsection (a) or (e)~~] that the actor is a law enforcement officer or a school administrator who:

(1)  possessed or accessed the visual material in good faith solely as a result of an allegation of a violation of Section 43.261;

(2)  allowed other law enforcement or school administrative personnel to possess or access the material only as appropriate based on the allegation described by Subdivision (1); and

(3)  took reasonable steps to destroy the material within an appropriate period following the allegation described by Subdivision (1).

(h-1)  It is an affirmative defense to prosecution under this section that the conduct was for a bona fide educational, medical, psychological, psychiatric, judicial, law enforcement, or legislative purpose.

(h-2)  It is an affirmative defense to prosecution under Subsection (a-2) or (e-1) that the actor is not more than two years older than the depicted child.

SECTION 2.  Article 38.45(a), Code of Criminal Procedure, is amended to read as follows:

(a)  During the course of a criminal hearing or proceeding, the court may not make available or allow to be made available for copying or dissemination to the public property or material:

(1)  that constitutes child pornography, as described by Section 43.26(a-1)(1) or (a-2)(2) [~~43.26(a)(1)~~], Penal Code;

(2)  the promotion or possession of which is prohibited under Section 43.261, Penal Code; or

(3)  that is described by Section 2 or 5, Article 38.071, of this code.

SECTION 3.  Article 39.15(a), Code of Criminal Procedure, is amended to read as follows:

(a)  In the manner provided by this article, a court shall allow discovery under Article 39.14 of property or material:

(1)  that constitutes child pornography, as described by Section 43.26(a-1)(1) or (a-2)(2) [~~43.26(a)(1)~~], Penal Code;

(2)  the promotion or possession of which is prohibited under Section 43.261, Penal Code; or

(3)  that is described by Section 2 or 5, Article 38.071, of this code.

SECTION 4.  Section 21.16(a)(5), Penal Code, is amended to read as follows:

(5)  "Visual material" means:

(A)  any film, photograph, videotape, negative, or slide or any photographic reproduction that contains or incorporates in any manner any film, photograph, videotape, negative, or slide; or

(B)  any disk, diskette, or other physical medium, or a file in any digital format, that allows an image to be displayed on a computer or other video screen and any image transmitted to a computer or other video screen by telephone line, cable, satellite transmission, or other method.

SECTION 5.  Section 43.261(b-1), Penal Code, is amended to read as follows:

(b-1)  For purposes of conduct prohibited under Subsection (b), visual material to which that conduct applies includes:

(1)  a depiction of a minor:

(A) [~~(1)~~]  who is recognizable as an actual person by the person's face, likeness, or other distinguishing characteristic, such as a unique birthmark or other recognizable feature; and

(B) [~~(2)~~]  whose image as a minor was used in creating, adapting, or modifying the visual material, including computer-generated visual material that was created, adapted, or modified  using an artificial intelligence application or other computer software; or

(2)  a depiction of a minor, created using an artificial intelligence application or other computer software, that to a reasonable person is virtually indistinguishable from an actual minor.

SECTION 6.  Section 43.262(b-1), Penal Code, is amended to read as follows:

(b-1)  For purposes of conduct prohibited under Subsection (b), visual material to which that conduct applies includes:

(1)  a depiction of a child:

(A) [~~(1)~~]  who is recognizable as an actual person by the person's face, likeness, or other distinguishing characteristic, such as a unique birthmark or other recognizable feature; and

(B) [~~(2)~~]  whose image as a child younger than 18 years of age was used in creating, adapting, or modifying the visual material, including computer-generated visual material that was created, adapted, or modified using an artificial intelligence application or other computer software; or

(2)  a depiction of a child, created using an artificial intelligence application or other computer software, that to a reasonable person is virtually indistinguishable from an actual child younger than 18 years of age.

SECTION 7.  The following provisions of the Penal Code are repealed:

(1)  Sections 43.26(b), (c), (d), (d-2), and (i);

(2)  Section 43.26(d-1), as added by Chapter 93 (S.B. 1527), Acts of the 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023; and

(3)  Section 43.26(d-1), Penal Code, as added by Chapter 1041 (S.B. 129), Acts of the 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023.

SECTION 8.  The changes in law made by this Act apply only to an offense committed on or after the effective date of this Act.  An offense committed before the effective date of this Act is governed by the law in effect on the date the offense was committed, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.  For purposes of this section, an offense was committed before the effective date of this Act if any element of the offense was committed before that date.

SECTION 9.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2025.

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