

For Immediate Release

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District Attorney Chris Arnt Testifies Before Senate Judiciary Committee in Favor of Enhanced Punishment for Child Molesters

Tuesday, March 22, 2022, LaFayette, GA - Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit District Attorney Chris A. Arnt testified at the Georgia Legislature before the Senate Judiciary Committee yesterday to strengthen the law to protect children against child sexual predators.

Arnt spoke in favor of House Bill 1188, which makes each act of child molestation a separate offense and makes each image or video of child pornography a separate offense. Arnt told the committee that child molesters should be held accountable for each act of child molestation they commit and each image of child pornography that they have in their possession.

“The victims of these crimes have to live with what is done to them for the rest of their lives,” said Arnt. “The offenders need to be punished for all of the harm that they do to the victim.” Arnt told the committee that an offender who has 50,000 images of child pornography should be subject to greater punishment than one who has five images. Arnt also noted that these images are out there forever, and every time one is viewed it re-victimizes that child. The Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously voted to pass the bill. It will now go to the rules committee, which must vote to send the bill to the full Senate.

HB 1188 is one of Governor Brian Kemp’s legislative priorities. The bill is authored by Rep. Jodi Lott. The bill is designed to restore the law to where it was prior to an opinion of the Supreme Court of Georgia, which held that child abusers could only be punished for one act of possession of child pornography no matter how many images they possessed, and that child molesters could only be punished for a single act of child molestation no matter how many different ways the victim was molested in an instance of child molestation. Arnt described the Supreme Court opinion as being a hyper technical reading of the statutes in question.

Arnt thanked Gov. Kemp and Rep. Lott for their efforts to correct this injustice and restore proper punishment for vile child sexual offenders. Arnt stated “Gov. Kemp has been a strong supporter of efforts to combat child sex predators across this state. Protecting Georgia’s children is a priority for Gov. Kemp and for my office. We are proud to stand with Gov. Kemp and Rep. Lott on this issue.”

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