

South Carolina General Assembly
126th Session, 2025-2026

A58, R83, S29

STATUS INFORMATION

General Bill

Sponsors: Senators Hutto, Reichenbach, Goldfinch, Leber, Jackson, Alexander, Rice, Fernandez, Campsen, Chaplin, Devine, Adams, Young, Garrett, Elliott, Turner, Ott, Graham, Cromer, Verdin and Kennedy

Companion/Similar bill(s): 3043, 3046

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Introduced in the Senate on January 14, 2025

Introduced in the House on February 19, 2025

Last Amended on May 8, 2025

Currently residing in the House

Governor's Action: May 22, 2025, Signed

Summary: MPIC

HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

Date	Body	Action Description with journal page number
12/11/2024	Senate	Prefiled
12/11/2024	Senate	Referred to Committee on Judiciary
1/14/2025	Senate	Introduced and read first time
1/14/2025	Senate	Referred to Committee on Judiciary
1/15/2025		Scrivener's error corrected
1/17/2025	Senate	Referred to Subcommittee: Adams (ch), Reichenbach, Devine, Kennedy, Stubbs
1/21/2025		Scrivener's error corrected
2/5/2025	Senate	Committee report: Favorable with amendment Judiciary (Senate Journal-page 47)
2/6/2025		Scrivener's error corrected
2/12/2025	Senate	Committee Amendment Adopted (Senate Journal-page 8)
2/12/2025	Senate	Amended (Senate Journal-page 8)
2/12/2025	Senate	Read second time (Senate Journal-page 8)
2/12/2025	Senate	Roll call Ayes-40 Nays-0 (Senate Journal-page 8)
2/13/2025	Senate	Read third time and sent to House (Senate Journal-page 15)
2/19/2025	House	Introduced and read first time (House Journal-page 63)
2/19/2025	House	Referred to Committee on Judiciary (House Journal-page 63)
2/25/2025		Scrivener's error corrected
4/30/2025	House	Committee report: Favorable with amendment Judiciary (House Journal-page 9)
5/1/2025	House	Amended (House Journal-page 71)
5/1/2025	House	Read second time (House Journal-page 71)
5/1/2025	House	Roll call Yeas-109 Nays-0 (House Journal-page 86)
5/1/2025	House	Unanimous consent for third reading on next legislative day (House

Journal-page 88)

5/2/2025 Scrivener's error corrected

5/2/2025 House Read third time and returned to Senate with amendments (House Journal-page 6)

5/6/2025 Senate House amendment amended (Senate Journal-page 87)

5/6/2025 Senate Roll call Ayes-45 Nays-0 (Senate Journal-page 87)

5/6/2025 Senate Returned to House with amendments (Senate Journal-page 87)

5/8/2025 House Non-concurrence in Senate amendment (House Journal-page 71)

5/8/2025 House Roll call Yeas-0 Nays-105 (House Journal-page 72)

5/8/2025 Senate Senate insists upon amendment and conference committee appointed Hutto, Kimbrell, Adams (Senate Journal-page 20)

5/8/2025 House Conference committee appointed T Moore, Wetmore, McCabe (House Journal-page 97)

5/8/2025 House Conference report adopted (House Journal-page 129)

5/8/2025 House Roll call Yeas-98 Nays-0 (House Journal-page 138)

5/8/2025 Senate Conference report adopted (Senate Journal-page 22)

5/8/2025 Senate Roll call Ayes-45 Nays-0

5/8/2025 House Ordered enrolled for ratification (House Journal-page 151)

5/20/2025 Ratified R 83

5/22/2025 Signed By Governor

5/27/2025 Effective date 05/22/25

5/27/2025 Act No. 58

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VERSIONS OF THIS BILL

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(A58, R83, S29)

AN ACT TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 16-15-375, RELATING TO THE DEFINITIONS PERTAINING TO THE DISSEMINATION OF HARMFUL MATERIAL TO MINORS, SO AS TO DEFINE “IDENTIFIABLE MINOR” AND “MORPHED IMAGE”; BY AMENDING SECTION 16-15-395, RELATING TO THE DEFINITION OF FIRST DEGREE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINORS, SO AS TO INCLUDE MORPHED IMAGES OF IDENTIFIABLE MINORS; BY AMENDING SECTION 16-15-405, RELATING TO THE DEFINITION OF SECOND DEGREE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINORS, SO AS TO INCLUDE MORPHED IMAGES OF IDENTIFIABLE MINORS; BY AMENDING SECTION 16-15-410, RELATING TO THE DEFINITION OF THIRD DEGREE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINORS, SO AS TO INCLUDE MORPHED IMAGES OF IDENTIFIABLE MINORS; BY ADDING SECTION 16-15-412 SO AS TO PROVIDE PROCEDURES FOR ARREST WARRANTS WHEN THE OFFENSE INCLUDES MORPHED IMAGES OF IDENTIFIABLE MINORS; BY AMENDING SECTION 23-3-430, RELATING TO THE SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY, SO AS TO INCLUDE THOSE GUILTY OF CRIMINAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINORS IN THE FIRST, SECOND, OR THIRD DEGREE ON THE APPROPRIATE TIERS OF THE REGISTRY; AND BY AMENDING SECTION 23-3-462, RELATING TO TERMINATION OF REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS, SO AS TO MAKE CONFORMING CHANGES.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

Definitions

SECTION 1. Section 16-15-375 of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

Section 16-15-375. The following definitions apply to Section 16-15-385, disseminating or exhibiting to minors harmful material or performances; Section 16-15-387, employing a person under the age of

eighteen years to appear in a state of sexually explicit nudity in a public place; Section 16-15-395, first degree sexual exploitation of a minor; Section 16-15-405, second degree sexual exploitation of a minor; Section 16-15-410, third degree sexual exploitation of a minor; Section 16-15-412, morphed image of an identifiable minor; arrest warrant; Section 16-15-415, promoting prostitution of a minor; and Section 16-15-425, participating in prostitution of a minor.

(1) “Harmful to minors” means that quality of any material or performance that depicts sexually explicit nudity or sexual activity and that, taken as a whole, has the following characteristics:

(a) the average adult person applying contemporary community standards would find that the material or performance has a predominant tendency to appeal to a prurient interest of minors in sex; and

(b) the average adult person applying contemporary community standards would find that the depiction of sexually explicit nudity or sexual activity in the material or performance is patently offensive to prevailing standards in the adult community concerning what is suitable for minors; and

(c) to a reasonable person, the material or performance taken as a whole lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for minors.

(2) “Material” means pictures, drawings, video recordings, films, digital electronic files, computer-generated images or pictures, or other visual depictions or representations but not material consisting entirely of written words.

(3) “Minor” means an individual who is less than eighteen years old.

(4) “Prostitution” means engaging or offering to engage in sexual activity with or for another in exchange for anything of value.

(5) “Sexual activity” includes any of the following acts or simulations

thereof:

(a) masturbation, whether done alone or with another human or animal;

(b) vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse, whether done with another human or an animal;

(c) touching, in an act of apparent sexual stimulation or sexual abuse, of the clothed or unclothed genitals, pubic area, or buttocks of another person or the clothed or unclothed breasts of a human female;

(d) an act or condition that depicts bestiality, sado-masochistic abuse, meaning flagellation or torture by or upon a person who is nude or clad in undergarments or in a costume which reveals the pubic hair, anus, vulva, genitals, or female breast nipples, or the condition of being fettered, bound, or otherwise physically restrained on the part of the one so clothed;

(e) excretory functions;

(f) the insertion of any part of a person's body, other than the male sexual organ, or of any object into another person's anus or vagina, except when done as part of a recognized medical procedure.

(6) "Sexually explicit nudity" means the showing of:

(a) uncovered, or less than opaquely covered human genitals, pubic area, or buttocks, or the nipple or any portion of the areola of the human female breast; or

(b) covered human male genitals in a discernibly turgid state.

(7) "Identifiable minor":

(a) means a person who:

(1) was a minor at the time the image was created, adapted, or modified, or whose image as a minor was used in the creating, adapting, or modifying of the image; and

(2) 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;

(b) shall not be construed to require proof of the actual identity of the identifiable minor.

(8) “Morphed image” means any visual depiction or representation, including any photograph, film, video, picture, or computer or computer-generated image or picture, whether made or produced by electronic, mechanical, or other means, of sexually explicit conduct, where such visual depiction or representation has been created, adapted, or modified to appear that an identifiable minor is engaging in sexual conduct or sexually explicit activity or appearing in a state of sexually explicit nudity.

First degree sexual exploitation of a minor, inclusion of morphed images of identifiable minors

SECTION 2. Section 16-15-395 of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

Section 16-15-395. (A) An individual commits the offense of first degree sexual exploitation of a minor if, knowing the character or content of the material or performance, he:

(1) uses, employs, induces, coerces, encourages, or facilitates a minor to engage in or assist others to engage in sexual activity or appear in a state of sexually explicit nudity when a reasonable person would infer the purpose is sexual stimulation for a live performance or for the purpose of producing material that contains a visual representation depicting this activity or a state of sexually explicit nudity when a reasonable person would infer the purpose is sexual stimulation;

(2) permits a minor under his custody or control to engage in sexual

activity or appear in a state of sexually explicit nudity when a reasonable person would infer the purpose is sexual stimulation for a live performance or for the purpose of producing material that contains a visual representation depicting this activity or a state of sexually explicit nudity when a reasonable person would infer the purpose is sexual stimulation;

(3) transports or finances the transportation of a minor through or across this State with the intent that the minor engage in sexual activity or appear in a state of sexually explicit nudity when a reasonable person would infer the purpose is sexual stimulation for a live performance or for the purpose of producing material that contains a visual representation depicting this activity or a state of sexually explicit nudity when a reasonable person would infer the purpose is sexual stimulation; or

(4) records, photographs, films, develops, duplicates, produces, or creates a digital electronic file for sale or pecuniary gain material that contains a visual representation depicting a minor or a morphed image of an identifiable minor engaged in sexual activity or a state of sexually explicit nudity when a reasonable person would infer the purpose is sexual stimulation.

(B) In a prosecution pursuant to this section, the trier of fact may infer that a participant in a sexual activity or a state of sexually explicit nudity depicted in material as a minor through its title, text, visual representations, or otherwise, is a minor.

(C) Mistake of age is not a defense to a prosecution pursuant to this section.

(D) A person who violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction, must be imprisoned for not less than three years nor more than twenty years. No part of the minimum sentence of

imprisonment may be suspended nor is the individual convicted eligible for parole until he has served the minimum term of imprisonment. Sentences imposed pursuant to this section must run consecutively with and commence at the expiration of another sentence being served by the person sentenced.

(E) The offense is a misdemeanor to be heard by the family court if the person charged under the provisions of subsection (A)(4) is a minor and the offense is the minor's first offense related to a morphed image of an identifiable minor. The family court may order behavioral health counseling from an appropriate agency or provider, as a condition of adjudicating a minor.

Second degree sexual exploitation of a minor, inclusion of morphed images of identifiable minors

SECTION 3. Section 16-15-405 of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

Section 16-15-405. (A) An individual commits the offense of second degree sexual exploitation of a minor if, knowing the character or content of the material, he:

(1) records, photographs, films, develops, duplicates, produces, or creates digital electronic file material that contains a visual representation of a minor or a morphed image of an identifiable minor engaged in sexual activity or appearing in a state of sexually explicit nudity when a reasonable person would infer the purpose is sexual stimulation; or

(2) distributes, transports, exhibits, receives, sells, purchases, exchanges, or solicits material that contains a visual representation of a minor or a morphed image of an identifiable minor engaged in sexual

activity or appearing in a state of sexually explicit nudity when a reasonable person would infer the purpose is sexual stimulation.

(B) In a prosecution pursuant to this section, the trier of fact may infer that a participant in sexual activity or a state of sexually explicit nudity depicted in material as a minor through its title, text, visual representations, or otherwise, is a minor.

(C) Mistake of age is not a defense to a prosecution pursuant to this section.

(D) A person who violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction, must be imprisoned not less than two years nor more than ten years. No part of the minimum sentence may be suspended nor is the individual convicted eligible for parole until he has served the minimum sentence.

(E) The offense is a misdemeanor to be heard by the family court if the person charged under the provisions of subsection (A) is a minor and the offense is the minor's first charge related to a morphed image of an identifiable minor. The family court may order behavioral health counseling from an appropriate agency or provider, as a condition of adjudicating a minor.

Third degree sexual exploitation of a minor, inclusion of morphed images of identifiable minors

SECTION 4. Section 16-15-410 of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

Section 16-15-410. (A) An individual commits the offense of third degree sexual exploitation of a minor if, knowing the character or content of the material, he possesses material that contains a visual representation of a minor or a morphed image of an identifiable minor

engaging in sexual activity or appearing in a state of sexually explicit nudity when a reasonable person would infer the purpose is sexual stimulation.

(B) In a prosecution pursuant to this section, the trier of fact may infer that a participant in sexual activity or a state of sexually explicit nudity depicted as a minor through its title, text, visual representation, or otherwise, is a minor.

(C) A person who violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction, must be imprisoned not more than ten years.

(D) This section does not apply to an employee of a law enforcement agency, including the State Law Enforcement Division, a prosecuting agency, including the South Carolina Attorney General's Office, or the South Carolina Department of Corrections who, while acting within the employee's official capacity in the course of an investigation or criminal proceeding, is in possession of material that contains a visual representation of a minor engaging in sexual activity or appearing in a state of sexually explicit nudity when a reasonable person would infer the purpose is sexual stimulation. The employee's official capacity in the course of such investigation or criminal proceeding includes making material available for inspection to the defendant's counsel in response to discovery requests.

(E) The offense is a misdemeanor to be heard by the family court if the person charged under the provisions of subsection (A) is a minor and the offense is the minor's first charge related to a morphed image of an identifiable minor. The family court may order behavioral health counseling from an appropriate agency or provider, as a condition of adjudicating a minor.

Warrants

SECTION 5. Article 3, Chapter 15, Title 16 of the S.C. Code is amended by adding:

Section 16-15-412. Any warrant for arrest for an alleged crime or offense that concerns a morphed image or an identifiable minor under Section 16-15-395, first degree sexual exploitation of a minor; Section 16-15-405, second degree sexual exploitation of a minor; or, Section 16-15-410, third degree sexual exploitation of a minor may only be issued upon:

(1) a return of a “true bill” of an indictment by the state grand jury,
or

(2) a finding of probable cause following an investigation conducted by the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force in conjunction with the Attorney General’s Office.

Sex offender registry, tiers

SECTION 6. Section 23-3-430(C)(1) of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

(1) For purposes of this article, a person who has been convicted of, or pled guilty or nolo contendere to any of the following offenses shall be referred to as a Tier I offender:

(a) criminal sexual conduct in the third degree (Section 16-3-654);

(b) kidnapping (Section 16-3-910) of a person eighteen years of age or older except when the court makes a finding on the record that the

offense did not include a criminal sexual offense or an attempted criminal sexual offense;

(c) incest (Section 16-15-20);

(d) buggery (Section 16-15-120);

(e) peeping, voyeurism, or aggravated voyeurism (Section 16-17-470);

(f) a person, regardless of age, who has been convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere in this State, or who has been convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere in a comparable court in the United States, or who has been convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere in the United States federal courts of indecent exposure or of a similar offense in other jurisdictions is required to register pursuant to the provisions of this article if the court makes a specific finding on the record that, based on the circumstances of the case, the convicted person should register as a sex offender;

(g) sexual intercourse with a patient or trainee (Section 44-23-1150);

(h) administering, distributing, dispensing, delivering, or aiding, abetting, attempting, or conspiring to administer, distribute, dispense, or deliver a controlled substance or gamma hydroxy butyrate to an individual with the intent to commit a crime listed in Section 44-53-370(f), except petit larceny or grand larceny;

(i) any other offense as described in Section 23-3-430(D);

(j) any other offense required by Title I of the federal Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (Pub. L. 109-248), the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA);

(k) sexual exploitation of a minor, first degree (Section 16-15-395), provided the offense is related to a morphed image of an identifiable minor. If the offender is under eighteen years of age and the

offense is related to a morphed image of an identifiable minor, then the adjudicated minor is not an offender and is not required to register pursuant to the provisions of this article;

(l) sexual exploitation of a minor, second degree (Section 16-15-405), provided the offense is related to a morphed image of an identifiable minor. If the offender is under eighteen years of age and the offense is related to a morphed image of an identifiable minor, then the adjudicated minor is not an offender and is not required to register pursuant to the provisions of this article; or

(m) sexual exploitation of a minor, third degree (Section 16-15-410); provided the offense is related to a morphed image of an identifiable minor. If the offender is under eighteen years of age and the offense is related to a morphed image of an identifiable minor, then the adjudicated minor is not an offender and is not required to register pursuant to the provisions of this article.

Sex offender registry, tiers

SECTION 7. Section 23-3-430(C)(2) of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

(2) For purposes of this article, a person who has been convicted of, or pled guilty or nolo contendere to any of the following offenses shall be referred to as a Tier II offender:

(a) criminal sexual conduct in the second degree (Section 16-3-653);

(b) engaging a child for sexual performance (Section 16-3-810);

(c) producing, directing, or promoting sexual performance by a child (Section 16-3-820);

(d) trafficking in persons (Section 16-3-2020) except when the court makes a finding on the record that the offense did not include a criminal sexual offense or an attempted criminal sexual offense;

(e) criminal sexual conduct with minors, second degree (Section 16-3-655(B)). If evidence is presented at the criminal proceeding, or in any court of competent jurisdiction, and the court makes a specific finding on the record that the conviction obtained for this offense resulted from consensual sexual conduct, as contained in Section 16-3-655(B)(2), provided the offender is eighteen years of age or less, or consensual sexual conduct between persons under sixteen years of age, the convicted person is not an offender and is not required to register pursuant to the provisions of this article;

(f) criminal sexual conduct with minors, third degree (Section 16-3-655(C)). If evidence is presented at the criminal proceeding, or in any court of competent jurisdiction, and the court makes a specific finding on the record that the conviction obtained for this offense resulted from consensual sexual conduct, as contained in Section 16-3-655(B)(2), provided the offender is eighteen years of age or less, or consensual sexual conduct between persons under sixteen years of age, the convicted person is not an offender and is not required to register pursuant to the provisions of this article;

(g) criminal solicitation of a minor if the purpose or intent of the solicitation or attempted solicitation was to:

(i) persuade, induce, entice, or coerce the person solicited to engage or participate in sexual activity as defined in Section 16-15-375(5);

(ii) perform a sexual activity in the presence of the person solicited (Section 16-15-342);

(h) violations of Article 3, Chapter 15, Title 16 involving a minor;

(i) sexual exploitation of a minor, first degree (Section 16-15-395), except as otherwise provided in this article;

(j) sexual exploitation of a minor, second degree (Section 16-15-405), except as otherwise provided in this article; or

(k) sexual exploitation of a minor, third degree (Section 16-15-410), except as otherwise provided in this article.

Conforming amendments

SECTION 8. Section 23-3-462(A) of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

(A) After successful completion of the requirements of this section, an offender may apply to the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division for the termination of the requirements of registration pursuant to this article. If it is determined that the offender has met the requirements of this section, SLED shall remove the offender's name and identifying information from the sex offender registry and shall notify the offender within one hundred twenty days that the offender has been relieved of the registration requirements of this article.

(1) A Tier I offender may file a request for termination of the requirement of registration with SLED in a form and process established by the agency, if the person:

(a) has been registered for at least fifteen years; or

(b) has been discharged from incarceration without supervision for at least fifteen years for the charge requiring registration; or

(c) has had at least fifteen years pass since the termination of active supervision of probation, parole, or any other alternative to incarceration for the charge requiring registration; or

(d) is a Tier I offender who was required to register as an offender

because of a conviction in another state or because of a federal conviction and who is eligible to be removed under the laws of the jurisdiction where the conviction occurred.

(2) A Tier II offender may file a request for termination of the requirement of registration with SLED in a form and process established by the agency, if the person:

(a) has been registered for at least twenty-five years;

(b) has been discharged from incarceration without supervision for at least twenty-five years for the charge requiring registration;

(c) has had at least twenty-five years pass since the termination of active supervision of probation, parole, or any other alternative to incarceration for the charge requiring registration; or

(d) is a Tier II offender who was required to register as an offender because of a conviction in another state or because of a federal conviction and who is eligible to be removed under the law of the jurisdiction where the conviction occurred.

(3) An offender who was convicted as an adult, and who is required to register as a Tier III offender may not file a request for termination of registration with SLED nor shall any such request be granted pursuant to this subsection.

(4) The requesting offender must have successfully completed all sex offender treatment programs that have been required.

(5) The requesting offender must not have been convicted of failure to register within the previous ten years.

(6) The offender must not have been convicted of any additional sexual offense or violent sexual offense after being placed on the registry.

(7) A filing fee, as set by SLED but not to exceed two hundred fifty dollars, shall be paid to file the request for termination of registration

requirements. The initial application may be filed with SLED and the administrative review may begin one hundred twenty days prior to the date specified in subsection (A)(1); however, any removal may not occur prior to the date specified.

Severability

SECTION 9. If any section, subsection, paragraph, subparagraph, sentence, clause, phrase, or word of this act is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such holding shall not affect the constitutionality or validity of the remaining portions of this act, the General Assembly hereby declaring that it would have passed this act, and each and every section, subsection, paragraph, subparagraph, sentence, clause, phrase, and word thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more other sections, subsections, paragraphs, subparagraphs, sentences, clauses, phrases, or words hereof may be declared to be unconstitutional, invalid, or otherwise ineffective.

Time effective

SECTION 10. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

Ratified the 20th day of May, 2025.

Approved the 22nd day of May, 2025.