



United States Senate
Washington D.C. 20510

May 4, 2022

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Mr. Charles Rivkin
Chairman
TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board
P.O. BOX 771
Washington, D.C. 20044

Mr. Rivkin:

Thank you for empowering parents through the provision of tools that enable them to identify television (TV) content that is not suitable for certain ages. In recent years, concerning topics of a sexual nature have become aggressively politicized and promoted in children's programming, including irreversible and harmful experimental treatments for mental disorders like gender dysphoria. To this end, we strongly urge you to update the TV Parental Guidelines and ensure they are up-to-date on best practices that help inform parents on this disturbing content.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 enabled greater parental choice in television programming. In establishing this law, Congress found that "studies indicate that children are affected by the pervasiveness and casual treatment of sexual material on television, eroding the ability of parents to develop responsible attitudes and behavior in their children."¹ The law requires TV manufacturers to establish a technology that would allow blocking of programs based on category ratings in its set receivers. In order for the technology, known as the V-Chip, to fulfill its purpose, Congress also incentivized the creation of TV parental guidelines as well as the creation of the Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board. The law was fully implemented allowing parents to easily block violent, sexual, or other programming that they believe may irrevocably interfere with their child's emotional and psychological development. In fact, the Board's age rating states that a TV-G rating contains "no sexual dialogue or situations," a TV-PG rating includes "some sexual situations," and a TV-14 rating includes "intense sexual situations."² As parents, we found this tool can be valuable in assisting us in identifying a healthy exposure of content for our children. The need for TV Parental Guidelines continues to this day.

Recently, a video emerged showing a prominent executive at children's entertainment giant Disney saying she supports having "many, many, many LGBTQIA+ characters in our stories."³ To the detriment of children, gender dysphoria has become sensationalized in the popular media and television with radical activists and entertainment companies. This radical and sexual sensation not only harms children, but also destabilizes and damages parental rights. This same company has concerningly denounced and vowed to work to repeal a recently passed Florida parental rights law that bans classroom instruction on sexual

¹ Telecommunications Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-104, 110 Stat. 56 (1996), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/104th-congress/senate-bill/652/text>.

² TV Parental Guidelines, Ratings, <http://www.tvguidelines.org/resources/TheRatings.pdf>.

³ New York Post, Disney exec vows more gay characters amid huge inclusivity push, by Joshua Rhett Miller, March 30, 2022, <https://nypost.com/2022/03/30/disney-executive-wants-more-lgbtqia-minority-character/>.

orientation or gender identity in kindergarten through third grade. Sexual orientation and gender identity instruction often entails a discussion concerning an individual's pattern of emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction. Parents all over the country have rightfully expressed outrage over its inclusion in the classroom.

A former creator of Disney children's content recently published an article acknowledging that every children's TV writer knows to be careful about "modeling behavior" as children will often imitate what is projected through the TV scripts, especially preschoolers.⁴ Sexually-related content not only negatively influences and exploits its young audiences, but also harms child actors. Time and again, child actors from major children's TV channels, including Disney, have revealed trauma from being sexualized at an early age.⁵ Considering that the cognitive markers of sexual desire emerge during puberty when adolescents undergo natural hormonal and physiological changes, it is wholly inappropriate to display this content in a TV-Y7 category and for other young audiences. This dialogue often involves the promotion of irreversible experimental treatments that involve surgical and otherwise invasive cosmetic procedures that are detrimental and life-altering, and do not evidence medical necessity. The motivations of hyper-sexualized entertainment producers striving to push this content on young audiences are suspect at best and predatory at worst.

The Board is obligated to ensure the rating criteria helps parents be informed about mature content before it is displayed to their children. In light of parents raising legitimate concerns on sexual orientation and gender identity content on children's TV shows, we expect the Board to fulfill its responsibility in updating the TV Parental Guidelines to reflect these concerns. In updating the TV Parental Guidelines, please consider precedent on how the Board has rated sexually related, violent, and obscene materials to ensure it is applied without ideological bias. We would appreciate a reply on the Board's plan no later than Wednesday, May 18, 2022. In addition, we request an in-person briefing with members of the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board. Specifically, this briefing will give the Board the opportunity to present its findings and answer questions about the Board's review process. Thank you for reviewing this request and working with Congress to ensure this is done in a timely manner.

Sincerely,



Roger Marshall, M.D.
U.S. Senator



Mike Lee
U.S. Senator



Mike Braun
U.S. Senator



Steve Daines
U.S. Senator



Kevin Cramer
U.S. Senator

⁴ American Thinker, Confessions of a Disney Writer, by Stella Paul, April 18, 2022, https://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2022/04/confessions_of_a_disney_writer.html.

⁵ Huffington Post, Cole Sprouse: Female Disney Stars Were 'Heavily Sexualized' Much Younger Than I Was, by Elyse Wanshal, April 5, 2022, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/cole-sprouse-female-disney-stars-sexualized_n_624c62f6e4b068157f7cd957.