

ASSEMBLY SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 2767

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 16, 2026

The Assembly Science, Innovation and Technology Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 2767.

As reported, this bill amends the child endangerment statute, N.J.S.2C:24-4, to create a fourth-degree crime of knowingly or recklessly causing or allowing a child to be subjected to sexual conduct through the use of automated interactive computer technology.

Under current law, endangering the welfare of a child occurs when a person engages in sexual conduct that would impair or debauch the morals of the child. Endangering the welfare of a child is a second-degree crime when committed by a person with a legal duty to care for the child, and is a third-degree crime when committed by other persons. Although the statute does not specify what types of acts constitute sexual conduct which would impair or debauch the morals of the child, it has been well-settled by the courts of this State that the conduct can occur online or over the telephone without actual physical contact and can include conversations with children that describe sexual activity. *See, e.g., State v. Maxwell*, 361 N.J. Super. 502 (Law Div. 2001); *State v. Johnson*, 460 N.J. Super. 481 (Law Div. 2019); *State v. McInerney*, 428 N.J. Super. 432 (App. Div. 2012).

Under the bill, any person who knowingly or recklessly causes, or allows, a child to be subjected to sexual conduct which would impair or debauch the morals of the child, through the person's creation, control, possession, manipulation, use, dissemination, sale, or promotion of any automated interactive computer technology that is capable of performing or simulating sexual conduct, is guilty of a crime of the fourth degree.

The bill provides an exception for AI technology that has safety features designed to stop a chatbot from simulating sexual conduct when it detects that a user is a child.

A crime of the second degree is punishable by five to 10 years imprisonment, a fine of up to \$150,000, or both. A crime of the third degree is punishable by three to five years imprisonment, a fine of up to \$15,000, or both. A crime of the fourth degree is punishable by up to 18 months imprisonment, a fine of up to \$10,000, or both.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2026-2027 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.