

PROTECTION FROM INTIMATE DEEP FAKES ACT

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<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

House Bill 4047 (proposed substitute H-2)
Sponsor: Rep. Matt Bierlein

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

House Bill 4048 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. Penelope Tsernoglou

Committee: Judiciary
Complete to 4-15-25

SUMMARY:

House Bill 4047 would create a new act, the Protection from Intimate Deep Fakes Act, to establish civil and criminal liability for the nonconsensual creation or *dissemination* of *deep fake* sexual images of an identifiable individual under certain circumstances.

Dissemination would mean the distribution to one or more persons, other than the individual depicted in the deep fake, or publication by any publicly available medium.

Deep fake would mean a video recording, motion picture film, sound recording, electronic image, or photograph, or a technological representation of speech or conduct substantially derivative of such a recording, film, image, or photograph, that is not an original recording of an actual occurrence or an original photograph without substantial modification, to which both of the following apply:

- It is so realistic that a reasonable person would believe it depicts speech or conduct of a *depicted individual*.
- Its production substantially depended on technical means, and not the ability of another individual to physically or verbally impersonate the depicted individual.

Depicted individual would mean an individual in a deep fake who is identifiable by virtue of their face, likeness, or other distinguishing characteristic.

Civil action

The bill would allow an individual or their representative to bring a civil action against a person for the nonconsensual creation or dissemination of a deep fake if all of the following apply:

- Either of the following:
 - The person created or disseminated a deep fake with the knowledge that the creation, distribution, or reproduction of the deep fake will cause physical, emotional, reputational, or economic harm to an individual falsely depicted.
 - The person created or disseminated a deep fake to *harass*, extort, threaten, or cause physical, emotional, reputational, or economic harm to an individual falsely depicted.
- The deep fake realistically depicts either of the following:
 - The *intimate parts* of the depicted individual.
 - The depicted individual engaging in *sexual contact* or *sexual penetration*.

- The depicted individual is identifiable in either of the following ways:
 - From the deep fake itself, by the depicted individual or by a reasonable individual viewing or listening to the deep fake.
 - From the *personal information* displayed in connection with the deep fake.

Harass would mean an act that would cause a substantial adverse effect on the safety, security, or privacy of a reasonable person.

Intimate parts would mean an individual’s genitalia or anus or, for a female individual, the individual’s nipple.

Sexual contact would mean the intentional touching of intimate parts or intentional touching with seminal fluid onto another individual’s body.

Sexual penetration would mean any of the following acts:

- Sexual intercourse, cunnilingus, fellatio, or anal intercourse.
- An intrusion, however slight, into the genital or anal openings of an individual by another’s body part or an object used by another for this purpose.

Personal information would mean any identifier that enables communication or in-person contact with an individual, including at least all of the following:

- The individual’s first and last name, first initial and last name, first name and last initial, or nickname.
- The individual’s home, school, or work address.
- The individual’s phone number, email address, or *social media* account information.
- The individual’s geolocation data.

Social media would mean any electronic medium, including an interactive computer service, telephone network, or data network, that allows users to create, share, and view user-generated content.

A cause of action described above would accrue at the time the depicted individual discovers that the deep fake has been created or disseminated. It could be filed in the county where the defendant resides, the county where the plaintiff resides, or the county where the deep fake was produced, reproduced, or stored.

The court would have to allow confidential filings to protect the privacy of the plaintiff in such an action, and it could grant injunctive relief to maintain the confidentiality of the plaintiff using a pseudonym.

Defenses

It would be a defense to an action described above that the depicted individual consented to the creation or possession of the deep fake or to the voluntary private or public transmission of the deep fake *only if both* of the following apply to that consent:

- It is contained in an agreement written in plain language that is signed knowingly and voluntarily by the depicted individual.

- It includes a general description of the intimate digital depiction and, if applicable, the audiovisual work it will be incorporated into.

It would be a defense to an action described above that one or more of the following apply:

- The creation or dissemination was made for the purpose of a criminal investigation or prosecution that is otherwise lawful.
- The creation or dissemination was for the purpose of, or in connection with, the reporting of unlawful conduct.
- The creation or dissemination was made in the course of seeking or receiving medical or mental health treatment and the image is protected from further dissemination.
- The creation or dissemination was made for legal proceedings and was consistent with common practice in civil proceedings necessary for the proper functioning of the civil justice system, or protected by court order that prohibited any further dissemination.
- All of the following:
 - The deep fake related to a matter of public interest.
 - Its creation or dissemination served a lawful public purpose.
 - The person creating or disseminating the deep fake as a matter of public interest clearly identified that the video recording, motion picture film, sound recording, electronic image, photograph, or other item was a deep fake.
 - The person acted in good faith to prevent further dissemination of the deep fake.

Damages and injunctive relief

In an action described above, the plaintiff could recover all of the following damages from a person found liable:

- Economic and noneconomic damages, including financial losses because of the creation or dissemination of the deep fake and damages for mental anguish, embarrassment, and humiliation.
- An amount equal to any profit made from the creation or dissemination of the deep fake by the person found liable.
- Actual court costs and fees and reasonable attorney fees.

In an action described above, the court could enter a temporary restraining order or a permanent injunction to prevent further harm to the plaintiff. The court could award the plaintiff a civil fine of up to \$1,000 per day for the violation of such an order.

Liability under the above provisions would not affect any other remedy available under law.

Criminal prohibition and penalties

The bill also would prohibit an individual from intentionally creating or disseminating a deep fake if all of the following apply:

- The individual has knowledge that the creation, distribution, dissemination, or reproduction of the deep fake will cause physical, emotional, reputational, or economic harm to an individual falsely depicted.
- The deep fake realistically depicts either of the following:
 - The intimate parts of the depicted individual.
 - The depicted individual engaging in a sexual act.

- The depicted individual is identifiable in either of the following ways:
 - From the deep fake itself, by the depicted individual or by a reasonable individual viewing or listening to the deep fake.
 - From the personal information displayed in connection with the deep fake.

An individual who violates the above would be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for up to one year, a fine of up to \$3,000, or both.

However, if one or more of the following apply, an individual who violates the above prohibition would be guilty of a felony punishable by imprisonment for up to three years, a fine of up to \$5,000, or both:

- The depicted individual suffers financial loss because of the creation or dissemination of the deep fake.
- The individual maintains an internet website, online service, online application, or mobile application for the purpose of creating or disseminating the deep fake.
- The individual posts the deep fake on a website.
- The individual creates or disseminates the deep fake with intent to profit from the dissemination.
- The individual creates or disseminates the deep fake with intent to harass, extort, threaten, or cause physical, emotional, reputational, or economic harm to the depicted individual.
- The individual has been previously convicted of violating the above prohibition.

Defenses and exceptions

It would be a defense to a prosecution that the depicted individual consented to the creation or possession of the deep fake or to the voluntary private or public transmission of the deep fake *only if both* of the following apply to that consent:

- It is contained in an agreement written in plain language that is signed knowingly and voluntarily by the depicted individual.
- It includes a general description of the intimate digital depiction and, if applicable, the audiovisual work into which it will be incorporated.

The above provisions concerning the criminal prohibition of, and penalties for, creation or dissemination of a deep fake would not apply if any of the following apply:

- The creation or dissemination is made for the purpose of a criminal investigation or prosecution that is otherwise lawful.
- The creation or dissemination is for the purpose of, or in connection with, the reporting of unlawful conduct.
- The creation or dissemination is made in the course of seeking or receiving medical or mental health treatment and the image is protected from further dissemination.
- The creation or dissemination is made for legal proceedings and is consistent with common practice in civil proceedings necessary for the proper functioning of the civil justice system, or protected by court order that prohibits any further dissemination.
- The deep fake relates to a matter of public interest and the creation or dissemination serves a lawful public purpose.

Other provisions

The bill provides that the new act could not be construed to impose civil or criminal liability on the following entities for merely providing the transmission infrastructure or access to content created by another person:

- An interactive computer service as defined in federal law.¹
- A provider of public mobile services or private radio services.
- A telecommunications network or broadband provider.

The bill states that the new act would not affect the ability to bring a civil action, or limit the ability to prosecute a person, under any other law.

The bill also states that the new act is severable—that is, if a court finds any part of it invalid, the other parts remain in effect. (All Michigan laws are always already severable.²)

House Bill 4048 would amend the Code of Criminal Procedure to make complementary changes to the sentencing guidelines. Dissemination of a deep fake with aggravating factors would be added as a Class F crime against a person with a statutory maximum term of imprisonment of three years.

The bill cannot take effect unless House Bill 4048 is also enacted.

MCL 777.17b

BACKGROUND:

The bills are similar to House Bills 5569 and 5570 of the 2023-24 legislative session, which were passed by the House of Representatives.

FISCAL IMPACT:

House Bill 4047 would have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the state and on local units of government. The number of convictions that would result under provisions of the bill is not known. Violations could be either misdemeanors or felonies, depending on the circumstances. New misdemeanor convictions would increase costs related to county jails and/or local misdemeanor probation supervision. Costs of local incarceration in county jails and local misdemeanor probation supervision, and how those costs are financed, vary by jurisdiction. New felony convictions would result in increased costs related to state prisons and state probation supervision. In fiscal year 2024, the average cost of prison incarceration in a state facility was roughly \$46,200 per prisoner, a figure that includes various fixed administrative and operational costs. State costs for parole and felony probation supervision averaged about \$5,500 per supervised offender in the same year. Those costs are financed with state general fund/general purpose revenue. Any increase in penal fine revenue would increase funding for public and county law libraries, which are the constitutionally designated recipients of those revenues.

¹ <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/47/230#f>

² <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/Laws/MCL?objectName=mcl-8-5>

Also, the bill would have an indeterminate fiscal impact depending on the number of plaintiffs that file civil actions and the number of offenders ordered to pay civil fines. A civil fine of not more than \$1,000 per day could be ordered to be paid by an individual who violates a temporary restraining order or permanent injunction entered by the court. Revenue collected from payment of civil fines is used to support public and county law libraries. Also, under section 8827(4) of the Revised Judicature Act, \$10 of the civil fine would be required to be deposited into the state's Justice System Fund, which supports various justice-related endeavors in the judicial branch and legislative branches of government and the Departments of State Police, Corrections, Health and Human Services, and Treasury.

The fiscal impact on local court systems would depend on how provisions of the bill affected court caseloads and related administrative costs. It is difficult to project the actual fiscal impact to courts due to variables such as law enforcement practices, prosecutorial practices, judicial discretion, case types, and complexity of cases.

Because there is no practical way to determine the number of violations that will occur under provisions of the bill, an estimate of costs to the state or to local units of government, an estimate of the amount of revenue the state would collect from payment of civil fines, or revenue collected for public and county law libraries cannot be made.

House Bill 4048 is a companion bill to House Bill 4047 and would amend the sentencing guidelines chapter of the Code of Criminal Procedure to include the proposed new felony of disseminating intimate deep fake with aggravating factors as a Class F felony against a person. The felony would be punishable by a statutory maximum of three years. The bill would not have a direct fiscal impact on the state or on local units of government.

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.