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4	UNITED STATES DIS	TRICT COURT			
5	CENTRAL DISTRICT C				
6	SOUTHERN DIVISION				
7					
8	JANE DOE on behalf of herself and all others similarly situated,	Case No. 8:21-cv-00338			
9		CLASS ACTION			
0	V.	THIRD AMENDED			
1		COMPLAINT FOR VIOLATION OF FEDERAL SEX			
2	MINDGEEK S.A.R.L., MG FREESITES, LTD (D/B/A PORNHUB), MG	OF FEDERAL SEA TRAFFICKING LAWS			
3 4	MINDGEEK USA INCOM ORATED, MINDGEEK S.A.R.L., MG FREESITES, LTD (D/B/A PORNHUB), MG FREESITES II, LTD, MG CONTENT RT LIMITED, AND 9219-1568 QUEBEC, INC. (D/B/A MINDGEEK),	JURY TRIAL DEMANDED			
5	Defendants.				
6					
7					
8					

1	NATURE OF THE ACTION
2	1. Plaintiff brings this proposed class action for damages and injunctive
3	relief on behalf of herself and all persons who were under the age of 18 when they
4	appeared in a video or image that has been uploaded or otherwise made available for
5	viewing on any website owned or operated by Defendants in the last ten years.
6	2. As alleged below, over the course of the last decade, Defendants have
7	knowingly benefited financially from thousands-if not millions-of videos posted
8	to their various websites featuring victims who had not yet reached the age of
9	majority. Rather than address this horrifying and pervasive trend, for years,
10	Defendants took almost no action, refusing to so much as institute any semblance of
11	an age-verification, or other, policy that would prevent the uploading of this deeply
12	problematic content.
13	3. The reason for Defendants' inaction is simple: greed. As Pornhub's
14	own Senior Community Manger publicly acknowledged via a Reddit post, age
15	verification would be a "disaster" for Pornhub because it "costs us money to
16	verify" and would result in a 50% reduction in traffic.
17	Katie_Pornhub • 2y
18	I'm the Sr. Community Manager for Pornhub and YouPorn. I've worked for them for six years.
19	··· 🕜 🕆 339
20	Katie_Pornhub • 2y
21	Mindgeek loses money. Any age verification devastates traffic. I know the conspiracy is somehow
22	we come out ahead with "AgeID" but we aren't
23	Pornhub stands to lose 50%+ of traffic. Have you not read this thread? You really think people are going to
24	age verify? Ageld will be free, it costs us money to verify, and overall it's a disaster. I can't possibly see
25	how anyone thinks this benefits porn sites, it just shows little understanding.
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4. In short, Defendants chose to prioritize their profits over the safety and welfare of children across the globe.

5. Defendants' decision is not only upsetting, it is illegal. As the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act ("TVPRA") makes clear, it is unlawful for any person or entity to knowingly (whether because it knew or should have known) benefit financially from sex trafficking, which includes any instance where a person under the age of 18 is caused to engage in a commercial sex act. That is precisely what Defendants have done here—on an incredible scale.

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#### THE PARTIES

6. Plaintiff Jane Doe is an individual who is now the age of majority under
 U.S. and California law. She is a United States citizen who resided within this
 judicial district at all relevant times alleged herein. She is also a victim of child sex
 trafficking and child pornography, as alleged herein.

Plaintiff Jane Doe requests that this Court permit her to proceed under a
pseudonym. Plaintiff's anonymity is necessary to preserve privacy in a matter of
sensitive and highly personal nature given that the allegations detailed herein relate
to Plaintiff's experience as a victim of child sex trafficking and child pornography.
Plaintiff's sensitive and personal experiences were not the result of any voluntary
undertaking on her part, and neither the public, nor the Defendants, will be prejudiced
by Plaintiff's identity remaining private.

8. Defendant MindGeek USA Incorporated is a corporation organized and
 existing under the laws of the state of Delaware, with an established place of business
 located at 23000 West Empire Avenue, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor, Burbank, California 91504. Upon
 information and belief, defendant can be served with process by serving its registered
 agent for service of process in the State of California, CT Corporation System, 818
 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 930, Los Angeles, CA. 90017. Upon information and belief,
 MindGeek USA Incorporated is a wholly owned subsidiary of MindGeek S.A.R.L.,

either directly or through intermediary companies also under the control MindGeek
 S.A.R.L.

9. Defendant MindGeek S.A.R.L. is a foreign entity (a Société à
responsabilité limitée) organized and existing under the laws of Luxembourg and
conducting business in the United States, including in this District. Although
incorporated in Luxembourg, MindGeek S.A.R.L.'s principal place of business is
Montreal, Canada, and has satellite offices in, among other places, Los Angeles,
California.

9 10. Defendant MG Freesites, Ltd. (d/b/a Pornhub) is a company incorporated in the Republic of Cyprus and conducting business in the United States, 10 including in this District. Upon information and belief, MG Freesites, Ltd. is a 11 wholly owned subsidiary of MindGeek S.A.R.L., either directly or through 12 intermediary companies that are also under the control of MindGeek S.A.R.L. Upon 13 information and belief, MG Freesites, Ltd. is predominantly under the control of and 14 operated by directors, officers, and employees working in MindGeek's offices in the 15 16 United States and Canada, with little business operations being conducted within the Republic of Cyprus. 17

18 11. Defendants MG Freesites II, Ltd. is a company incorporated under the
19 laws of the Republic of Cyprus conducting business throughout the United States,
20 including within this District.

12. Defendant MG Content RT Limited is a company organized under the
laws of Ireland conducting business throughout the United States, including within
this District.

13. Defendant 9219-1568 Quebec, Inc. (d/b/a MindGeek) is a company
organized and existing under the laws of Canada with a principal place of business
located in Montreal, though it conducts business throughout the United States,
including within this District.

1	14. Herein, "Defendants" or "MindGeek" refers to MindGeek S.A.R.L.,
2	MG Freesites, Ltd., MG Freesites II, Ltd., MG Content RT Limited, 9219-1568
3	Quebec, Inc., MindGeek USA Incorporated, and all of their parents, subsidiaries and
4	affiliates.
5	15. Defendants have incorporated dozens of subsidiaries and related
6	companies around the world, the details of which are unknown to the Class at this
7	time. However, all the MindGeek entities operate as a single business enterprise,
8	commingling their funds and other assets to shelter and avoid liabilities and to hide
9	the identity of their owners, and are jointly and severally liable in this action as alter
10	egos of one another.
11	16. Plaintiff is unaware of any MindGeek-related entity that does not act at
12	the direction of the MindGeek enterprise operated by Defendants.
13	JURISDICTION AND VENUE
14	17. This Court has original subject matter jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C.
15	§ 1331.
16	18. The claims asserted herein arise under 18 U.S.C. § 1595(a). Pursuant to
17	Section 1595(a), "an individual who is a victim of a violation of this chapter" may
18	bring a civil action in "an appropriate district court of the United States and may
19	recover damages and reasonable attorneys fees."
20	19. The court may properly exercise personal jurisdiction over all
21	Defendants. Each of the Defendants maintains minimum contacts with this District,
22	such that maintenance of this lawsuit does not offend traditional notions of fair play
23	and substantial justice.
24	20. Defendants have offices in this State and this District, conducting
25	business directly related to the websites at issue in this case. Specifically, MindGeek
26	USA Incorporated is a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the state
27	of Delaware, with an established place of business located at 23000 West Empire

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Avenue, 7th Floor, Burbank, California 91504. According to recent papers filed with

the California Secretary of State, MindGeek USA Incorporated also maintains a business, mailing, and street address at 21800 Oxnard Street, Suite 150, Woodland Hills, California 91367. Collectively, Defendants transmit millions upon millions of videos and images to and from this State on an annual basis. And according to analytics Defendants recently posted on Pornhub.com, Los Angeles, California is the fourth city by volume of Pornhub.com usage.

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21. Defendants have also purposefully availed themselves of this Court's jurisdiction, including in the case of MindGeek S.A.R.L. and MindGeek USA, Inc., by having litigated in this District. *See Preservation Technologies, LLC v. MindGeek USA, Inc. and MindGeek S.A.R.L.*, Case No. 2:17-cv-08906-DOC-JPR (C.D. Cal.).

11 22. Jurisdiction is further appropriate under 18 U.S.C. §1596, which
12 provides for jurisdiction over any offender, in addition to any "domestic or extra13 territorial jurisdiction otherwise provided by law," where the offender is "present in
14 the United States, irrespective of the nationality of the alleged offender."

15 23. Venue is proper in this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391 because a
16 substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claims asserted in this
17 action occurred in the judicial district where this action was brought. Venue is also
18 appropriate in this district because defendant MindGeek USA, Inc. maintains a place
19 of business in this district.

20 21 I.

### <u>SEX TRAFFICKING AND CHILD PORNOGRAPHY ON THE</u> <u>INTERNET</u>

22 24. Sex trafficking and the proliferation of child pornography are rapidly
23 growing problems in the United States. Human trafficking is a 150-billion-dollar
24 industry. Out of an estimated 40.3 million victims, 25% are children.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> https://coil.com/p/RileyQ/Child-Trafficking-What-You-Need-To-Know/mj4WEwhW7 have created new models for sexual exploitation and trafficking, which are hidden
and protected by cryptocurrency, laundered money, foreign Internet servers and
anonymous messaging applications. The Child Rescue Coalition alone has identified
71 million unique IP addresses worldwide sharing and downloading sexually explicit
images and videos of children.<sup>2</sup>

6 26. The Internet is the number one platform for customers to buy and sell
7 sex with children in the United States. Many sex buyers use the Internet to identify
8 and connect with sellers and victims. Traffickers, in turn, use online networks, social
9 media, websites, and dating tools to disguise their identities while identifying
10 potential victims, which reduces traffickers' chances of being caught by law
11 enforcement.

- 27. Americans are some of the top consumers and producers of child
  pornography. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, "Federal law defines
  child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a
  minor (persons less than 18 years old)."
- 16 28. According to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children ("NCMEC"), their cyber tip line has received more than 50 million reports of 17 suspected child exploitation from 1998 through 2019, with 18.4 million reports in 18 2018 alone. The vast majority of these reports contain child sexual exploitation 19 20 material ("CSEM"), most of which is on the Internet. North America now hosts 37% of child sexual exploitation content and children under the age of 10 now account for 21 22 22% of online porn consumption among those under the age of 18, while 10-14 yearolds make up 36%.<sup>3</sup> 23
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- 29. The link between sexual exploitation and pornographic videos is undeniable. According to an article by Melissa Farley, 49 percent of sexually

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 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> *Id.* <sup>3</sup> https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/enough-is-enough-calls-on-doj-to-investigate-mindgeek-for-a-trifecta-of-potential-us-law-violations-child-abuse-material-trafficking-videos-and-obscene-content-301196447.html

exploited women say pornographic videos of them were made while they were being
 sold for sex.<sup>4</sup>

3 30. Survivors of CSEM are significantly impacted—emotionally, mentally, 4 and physically—as a result of their abuse, and experience continuing and pervasive 5 symptoms such as feelings of shame and humiliation, powerlessness, hopelessness, 6 fear, anger, anxiety, and depression, as well as sleeping disturbances, body image 7 disturbances, self-harm behaviors, eating disorders, and suicidal ideation. According 8 to one study, survivors of CSEM are likely to be re-victimized and to receive 9 blackmail and threats as a result of their initial victimization via CSEM.<sup>5</sup>

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#### II. <u>THE TVPA AND TVPRA</u>

31. In response to the growing problem of sex trafficking, in 2000, Congress
passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act ("TVPA"), which laid the groundwork
for the federal response to human trafficking.

In 2003, Congress reauthorized the TVPA and passed the Trafficking
Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003, Pub. L. No. 108-193, § 4(a)(4)(A),
117 Stat. 2875, 2878 (2003) ("TVPRA"). Under the TVPRA, trafficking victims can
sue their traffickers in federal court.

33. In 2008, Congress amended the TVPRA to make it easier for victims of 18 trafficking violations to bring civil suits. First, the civil remedy was expanded to 19 20 include enterprise liability. It was likewise expanded to include anyone who 21 "knowingly benefits, financially or by receiving anything of value from participation" 22 in a venture which that person knew or should have known has engaged in an act in violation of this chapter." 18 U.S.C. § 1595(a). Second, Congress 23 expanded the statute's reach to include extraterritorial jurisdiction for certain 24

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> "Renting an Organ for Ten Minutes: What Tricks Tell Us about Prostitution, Pornography, and Trafficking," in *Pornography: Driving the Demand in International Sex Trafficking*, ed. David E. Guinn and Julie DiCaro (Bloomington, N: Xlibris, 2007), 145.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> <sup>5</sup> https://protectchildren.ca/pdfs/C3P\_SurvivorsSurveyFullReport2017.pdf

trafficking offenses. *Id.* The statute of limitations is ten years, or ten years after the
 victim turned 18 if the victim was a minor. *See id.* § 1595(c).

- 3 34. Commercialization of sex acts involving minors is a violation of the
  4 TVPRA. Under the TVPRA,
  - (a)Whoever knowingly—

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(1) in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce, or within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States, recruits, entices, harbors, transports, provides, obtains, advertises, maintains, patronizes, or solicits by any means a person; or

(2) benefits, financially or by receiving anything of value, from participation 10 11 in a venture which has engaged in an act described in violation of paragraph (1), knowing, or, except where the act constituting the violation of paragraph 12 (1) is advertising, in reckless disregard of the fact, that means of force, threats 13 of force, fraud, coercion described in subsection (e)(2), or any combination of 14 such means will be used to cause the person to engage in a commercial sex 15 16 act, or that the person has not attained the age of 18 years and will be caused to engage in a commercial sex act, shall be punished as provided in subsection 17 (b). 18

18 U.S.C. §1591(a). Under §1595(a), not only perpetrators who act "knowingly"
under §1591, but also "whoever knowingly benefits, financially or by receiving
anything of value from participation in a venture which that person knew or should
have known has engaged in an act in violation of this chapter" is civilly liable.

35. Defendants knowingly benefit from CSEM on their websites. By
encouraging sensational and illegal content to be posted on their websites,
Defendants receive substantial advertising revenues. By encouraging and benefitting
from CSEM, Defendants participate in the venture and indeed facilitate the conduct
of sex traffickers, including those sex traffickers who deal specifically with children
and child pornography.

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1 36. In 2018, in response to platforms such as those run by Defendants 2 knowingly allowing human trafficking to occur and profiting from it, Congress passed the Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act/Stop 3 Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (FOSTA/SESTA). Pornhub and other tube sites run 4 by Defendants previously sought to use Section 230 of the Communications Decency 5 6 Act to whitewash their liability. FOSTA/SESTA was enacted to close that perceived loophole, including for website BackPage.com, which "for years, ha[d] been accused 7 of accepting classified ads promoting prostitution which allegedly resulted in sex 8 trafficking of . . . minors."<sup>6</sup> Because "section 230" was "never intended to provide 9 legal protection to websites that unlawfully promote and facilitate . . . traffickers," 10 and-under the purported shield of Section 230-websites had been "reckless in 11 allowing the sales of sex trafficking victims and *have done nothing to prevent the* 12 trafficking of children," Congress "clarifi[ed]" Section 230. PL 115-164, 132 Stat 13 1253 (2018) (emphasis added). 14

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The statute now makes it clear that websites and other platforms may be 37. 16 held liable for, among other things, knowingly assisting, facilitating, or supporting sex trafficking, and clarifies the Communications Decency Act's Section 230 safe 17 harbors to authorize enforcement of federal or state sex trafficking laws. 18

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#### III. **DEFENDANTS' BUSINESS MODEL**

20 38. Defendants constitute a series of privately held companies that operate 21 many popular pornographic websites, including, among others, Pornhub, RedTube, 22 and YouPorn. Defendants also operate many adult film production companies, 23 including Brazzers, Digital Playground, Men.com, Reality Kings, Sean Cody, and WhyNotBi.com. 24

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As explained by Defendants' leadership in a recently authored letter to 39. the Canadian Parliament:

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>https://www.forbes.com/sites/larrymagid/2018/04/06/doj-seizes-backpage-com-weeks-after-congress-passes-sex-trafficking-law/?sh=42687f0350ba 28

Our flagship video sharing platform is Pornhub. Created in 2007, Pornhub is a leading free, ad-supported, adult content hosting and streaming website, offering visitors the ability to view content uploaded by verified users, models, and third-party adult entertainment companies. Pornhub Premium, our subscription service, provides subscribers with additional exclusive studio-produced content in an ad-free environment.<sup>7</sup>

9 40. In 2019, Pornhub had roughly 42 billion visits, an average of 115 million visits per day. This made Pornhub the eighth most visited website in the United 10 11 States, falling just behind such household names as: Google.com (1st), YouTube.com (2nd), Facebook.com (3rd), Amazon.com (4th), Yahoo.com (5th), Twitter.com (6th), 12 and Instagram.com (7th). And beating out such other household names as: 13 Wikipedia.org, Zillow.com, and Zoom.us.<sup>8</sup> 14

41. according to analytics Defendants have posted 15 Further, on 16 Pornhub.com, the United States is the top country by volume of Pornhub.com usage and, Los Angeles, California is the fourth city by volume of the same. 17

Defendants' leadership, of course, is aware of its massive success. In 42. 18 their letter to Canadian Parliament, Defendants' executives wrote: 19

Demand for online adult entertainment is as old as the 20 internet. Demand for MindGeek's content rivals that of 21 some of the largest social media platforms. For example, 22 in 2020, Pornhub averaged over 4 million unique user 23 sessions per day in Canada alone, equivalent to over 10% 24 of the adult Canadian population.<sup>9</sup> 25

26 <sup>7</sup>https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/432/ETHI/Brief/BR11079307/br -external/MindGeek-e.pdf <sup>8</sup> https://www.similarweb.com/top-websites/united-states/ <sup>9</sup> https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/432/ETHI/Brief/BR11079307/br 27

28 -external/MindGeek-e.pdf

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### A. <u>Defendants' Business Embraces User-Generated Uploads of</u> <u>Commercial Sex Acts</u>

43. The most popular feature on Pornhub is a searchable library. As of
December 1, 2020, Pornhub had about 14,000,000 pornographic videos in its free
video library.

44. Pornhub and many of the other websites operated by Defendants are
"tube sites." Meaning, Pornhub's interface is similar to YouTube, with individual
users—not formal studios—uploading much of the content and comments available
for viewing.

45. Pornhub depends heavily on this community of user-creators. Until
recently, in order to upload a video or image to Pornhub, all a user need do was create
an account, click on the upload button next to the search bar, upload their content,
and decide whether the content should be shown in standard or high definition.<sup>10</sup>

46. The process takes less than ten minutes. A user can post any video or
image of any person doing anything without any consequences. The user does not
have to demonstrate that he or she owns the copyrights in the content, that those
depicted in the content have consented, or that those depicted in the content are of
majority age.

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47. Defendants make it easy for users to upload to its network of websites to maximize their exposure, which includes Pornhub , Redtube, and YouPorn.

48. Defendants also have mechanisms for users to participate in the profits from their content. For example, to the extent a user is hoping to participate in the earnings from their uploads to Pornhub, Pornhub has a Model Program, in which users get "verified" by Pornhub staff and are paid a percentage of the ad revenue made on their verified content. Participating users are paid as much as 80% of the

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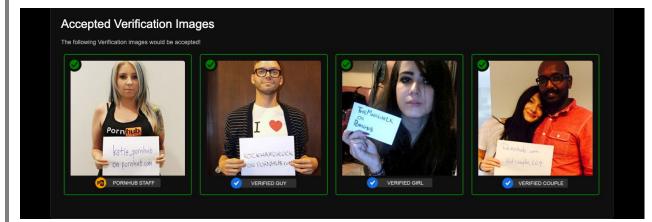
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> https://help.pornhub.com/hc/en-us/articles/229817547-How-do-I-upload-videos-12

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advertising revenue generated by their videos, based on the number of video views 1 and performance of the advertisements by clicks, user country, and sales.<sup>11</sup> 2

Getting verified in Pornhub's Model Program only requires a user to 3 49. upload a photo purportedly of himself or herself showing their username. In 4 describing verification, Pornhub encouraged users to "prove that you are real, stand 5 6 out and attract more attention from other Pornhub community users!" But all that is needed is a Pornhub account, an avatar uploaded to the user's account, and a 7 verification image. The verification image requires only that the user hold up a photo 8 with his or her username and pornhub.com written on it (or written on the user's 9 body). Pornhub requires that the video show a picture of the user's face and required 10 11 that the user not wear a mask or sunglasses in the picture.

50. The below are actual examples given by Pornhub showing all that has 12 been required for a user to become verified with Pornhub's "Model Program." 13



51. In order to sign up in Pornhub's Model Hub program, a user is not even required to list his or her birthdate. If a user clicks through the signup process, he or she is only alerted if they fail to note their gender on the Model Hub application.

Indeed, Pornhub lists many reasons on their site why a Model Hub 52. Verification Image might be rejected. The fact that an applicant may not be 18 years old is not one of the reasons. The only reasons described on Pornhub's site are: (1)

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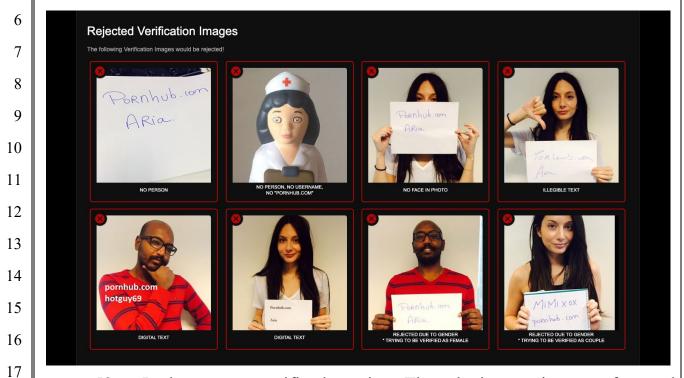
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<sup>11</sup>https://help.pornhub.com/hc/en-us/articles/360046090414-Earnings-and-28 Payments

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the photo does not show a person, (2) the photo does not show a username, (3) the photo does not say "pornhub.com," (4) the model's face is not in the photo, (5) the text is illegible, (6) the text is digital (vs. handwritten), (7) the applicant tries to be verified using a gender other than what is listed on their application, and (8) the applicant tries to be verified as a couple when the applicant is a single person:



53. In short, no age verification exists. The only time age is even referenced in the process is when Pornhub requires a user to check a box indicating that they are over the age of 18 when uploading their photograph. Defendants take no action to confirm the age of the model applicant in the submission process.

54. There is also the other problem that even if a Model Hub applicant posted a legitimate photo of themselves where they were over the age of 18 in order to obtain Pornhub's "verification" checkmark, there is nothing to stop Model Hub users from uploading videos of someone else who is not over the age of 18.

55. For "verified" Model Hub users, the name is obviously deceptive, as the only thing MindGeek verifies is that someone can hold up a piece of paper with writing on it. There is no requirement to use government-issued identification. And

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the verification process has nothing to do with the people <u>appearing</u> in the videos or
 images, whose age, as described more below, also went entirely unverified.

56. Clearly, the so-called "verification" process associated with Modelhub does nothing to protect victims of child sex trafficking. Pornhub acknowledged as much when it admitted to giving its "seal of approval" for 58 videos in which a 15year-old girl was repeatedly assaulted, allowing Pornhub and the victim's traffickers to profit from her repeated rape.



57. Another way in which MindGeek stands out is that, until very recently, any user of MindGeek could also download videos and images from its websites. This meant that even if victims could convince a website to take down a video depicting child pornography, their videos were frequently uploaded anew and/or recirculated on other websites by users who had already downloaded the content.

58. Defendants permit their users to send each other private, direct messages. Users use such private, direct messages to send each other information about how to access CSEM. Defendants also permit users to create their own private

folders to privately upload and share videos and images—including CSEM—
 privately.<sup>12</sup>

59. Defendants also created their own VPN to make it even more difficult
for law enforcement to locate traffickers. Pornhub also supports the use of
cryptocurrency on its site.<sup>13</sup>

6 60. Pornhub has also created a tor site to anonymize web traffic and prevent
7 law enforcement from tracking users' activities.<sup>14</sup>

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#### B. Defendants Create and Produce Their Own Content

9 61. In addition to permitting users to upload content to Defendants' websites, Defendants create and produce their own content. In a 2017 interview, 10 11 MindGeek's Fabian Thylmann acknowledged that Pornhub was producing and creating content, especially live content, noting that "in terms of money making, 12 live content can't be copied and it can't be stolen in the end because it's all on the 13 live at that point so it's not interesting anymore so therefore that is a huge driver 14 15 for the business and it's a very important one and it completely changes the kind of hosting you need and so on."15 16

When asked "Does that also mean . . . you've got to go more 17 62. *upstream into the production end* of it it's not just distribution and serving it's 18 creating the content now if it's all live, is that a fair assumption in terms of 19 business model evolution?" Mr. Thylmann responded, "Yes, I mean to make 20 21 money either way to make real good money you need to either way, or even back 22 then I just had a good mix of it so this was the strength of Manwin that it had the mix of both creation and and tube sites but it's getting more and more 23 important today so the big companies the real money makers in the business if 24

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> See, e.g., https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-117-ba10-wstatemickelwaitl-20210325.pdf

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> https://www.theverge.com/2018/5/24/17382144/pornhub-launches-vpn-vpnhub
 <sup>14</sup> https://www.pcmag.com/news/pornhub-is-now-available-as-a-tor-site-to-protect-

 <sup>27</sup> Inttps://www.pcmag.com/news/pommub-is-now-avanable-as-a-tor-site-to-protectusers-privacy
 28 <sup>15</sup> https://youtu.be/ILKW9PNQAbM

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you look at a single websites they are without a question the live things and not 1 2 necessarily the ones that have the traffic. They make obviously good money but if you look at the amount of money that the live systems make it's a lot better, so 3 4 so that's the more important part."<sup>16</sup>

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"Teen" is one of Defendants' top live content categories. 63.

Defendants also upload content from Pornhub to other websites, 64. 6 including YouPorn, RedTube, and Tube8. Indeed, for users in Defendants' revenue-7 sharing Model Program, Defendants automatically upload content from Pornhub to 8 9 their other websites such as YouPorn, RedTube, and Tube8, and share revenue from advertisements on videos on those cites with their users. 10

Pornhub , help , en-us , articles

### Make More Money in the Model Program with Auto-Exports! - Pornhub

Your content uploaded to Pornhub will automatically be exported to the other sites. \*\*\* Please do not upload your videos to Youporn, Redtube, or Tube8 directly as we ...

Missing: shares | Must include: shares

65. 21 Defendants own a number of other sites, including movie studios, reality sites, and managed sites, including Brazzers, Babes.com, Reality Kings, Digital 22 Playground, Twistys, Men, Mofos.com, mydirtyhobby, SexTube, .webcam, Wicked, 23 Lesbea.com, and Playboy.<sup>17</sup> 24

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 $^{16}$  Id. <sup>17</sup> https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-117-ba10-wstate-28 mickelwaitl-20210325.pdf

Case	8:21-cv-00338-CJC-ADS Document 107 Filed 05/05/23 Page 18 of 52 Page ID #:2088
1	C. <u>Defendants Knowingly Benefit From Child Sex Trafficking</u>
2	1. Defendants Have Earned Enormous Profits
3	66. Defendants make money from trafficking with premium subscriptions,
4	advertising, and selling user data.
5	67. For \$9.99/month, users can pay for a "premium" subscription, which
6	lets them access content behind a paywall that is different from the content free users
7	can see. <sup>18</sup>
8	68. Defendants also sell banner and sidebar advertisements, as well as
9	advertisements that appear before and after videos. <sup>19</sup> Defendants place those
10	advertisements on videos featuring CSEM.20
11	69. Defendants generate substantial advertising revenue by hosting
12	advertisements on their sites using their TrafficJunky ad network and other sites,
13	which receive billions of ad impressions on a daily basis.
14	70. Defendants also harvest and monetize vast amounts of user data that
15	they share with advertisers and other companies. <sup>21</sup>
16	71. Defendants also make deals with sex traffickers by featuring videos of
17	trafficked minors in exchange for a cut of the proceeds. For example, Pornhub takes
18	a cut of users' earnings from the Modelhub program. Under the Modelhub program,
19	which had 98,000 "amateur" models in 2019, "verified" users can sell their videos
20	and Pornhub takes a 35% cut of all sales. Models can also select to include their
21	videos on Pornhub Premium and earn a share of revenue from video views. They
22	can create subscription services of their fans, called a "Fan Club," for which Pornhub
23	takes a 20% cut of revenue, and can also make "custom clips" in response to requests
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25	mickelwaitl-20210325.pdf
26	<sup>18</sup> https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-117-ba10-wstate- mickelwaitl-20210325.pdf <sup>19</sup> https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-117-ba10-wstate- mickelwaitl-20210325.pdf <sup>20</sup> https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-117-ba10.wstate-
27	<sup>20</sup> https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-117-ba10-wstate- mickelwaitl-20210325.pdf

 <sup>21</sup>https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-117-ba10-wstatemickelwaitl-20210325.pdf by "fans," for which Pornhub takes a 35% cut of all sales. Models can also receive
 direct "tips" on their Pornhub or Modelhub profile, and Pornhub takes a 20% cut of
 all tip revenue.<sup>22</sup>

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72. There's no question that financial considerations drive the content on 4 MindGeek's websites. MindGeek collects money from ads featured with its unpaid 5 6 videos, and shares some of that revenue with the users that post the content. It also collects subscriptions from premium users of its websites. Those subscriptions 7 generated \$1.3 billion in revenue between 2012 and 2018.<sup>23</sup> Following an 8 9 investigation from the *New York Times* revealing the extent of child pornography featured on Pornhub's website, multiple financial institutions, including Visa, 10 11 Mastercard, and Discover, stopped processing transactions for Pornhub. Within days, Pornhub removed 10 million videos, nearly two-thirds of the videos on its site. 12 After the New York Times investigation, MindGeek's auditor, Grant Thornton, 13 resigned.<sup>24</sup> 14

15 73. Pornhub has since made modifications to its website, like limiting 16 content to that posted only by "verified" users in its Model Hub program. Of course, 17 as described above, restricting content on Pornhub to only "verified" users is 18 meaningless because Pornhub has no age verification process in place to confirm that 19 "verified" users are over the age of 18. Nor does Pornhub have a mechanism in place 20 to confirm that the user posting the video or photograph is the same as the user 21 depicted in the video or photograph.

- 74. In April 2021, Pornhub published its first "transparency report,"
  detailing its supposed efforts to, for example, locate and remove CSEM from its
  website.<sup>25</sup> In that report, Pornhub claims to use a variety of automated image-
- <sup>25</sup>/<sub>26</sub> <sup>22</sup> https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-117-ba10-wstate-mickelwaitl-20210325.pdf

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>
 <sup>23</sup> https://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/grant-thornton-resigns-as-auditor <sup>27</sup>
 <sup>28</sup> https://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/grant-thornton-resigns-as-auditor <sup>29</sup> to-firms-owned-by-pornhub-operator-1.4480517

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> *Id.* <sup>25</sup> https://help.pornhub.com/hc/en-us/articles/1260803955549-Transparency-Report

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1 recognition technologies used for detecting child pornography. Companies like Pornhub are legally required to report CSEM to NCMEC, which maintains a database 2 of known CSEM.<sup>26, 27</sup> From that database, NCMEC creates unique "hashes" that 3 4 represent the CSEM, and can be used with image-recognition technologies to automatically identify other instances (or near instances) of those same images and 5 videos.<sup>28</sup> For example, "PhotoDNA is able to compare the attributes of any given 6 images with those of illegal images to seek out matches," and "much of the process 7 is entirely automated and hands-off."29 8

9 75. PhotoDNA has been available, for free, to qualified organizations since 2014.<sup>30</sup> On information and belief, Defendants did not begin using PhotoDNA, or 10 11 any other well-known and long-available image-recognition technologies to identify and remove CSEM, until it disclosed that use for the first time in the 2021 Pornhub 12 "transparency report." 13

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#### **Defendants Facilitate Child Sex Trafficking By Encouraging** 2. **Users To Target Underage Content**

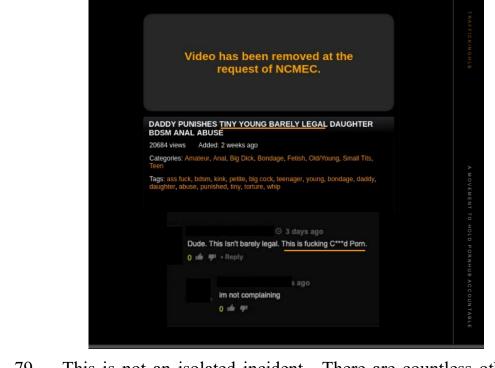
76. In an effort to attract attention and revenues (for themselves and 16 Defendants), users post content that generates traffic. Often this content is child 17 pornography. 18

77. Defendants also capitalize on the ability of CSEM to drive traffic to their 19 20 sites. Even after the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has called for the removal of CSEM, Defendants have left the links to the videos on their sites 21 22 (with only the videos removed) to continue to drive web traffic.

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- 24
- 25 26 https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/acting-ag-and-five-country-statement-temporaryderogation-eprivacy-directive-combat-child
- 26
- <sup>27</sup> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PhotoDNA
   <sup>28</sup> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PhotoDNA
   <sup>29</sup> https://betanews.com/2015/07/17/microsoft-photodna-weeds-out-illegal-child-27 porn-and-abuse-images/ 28
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PhotoDNA 20

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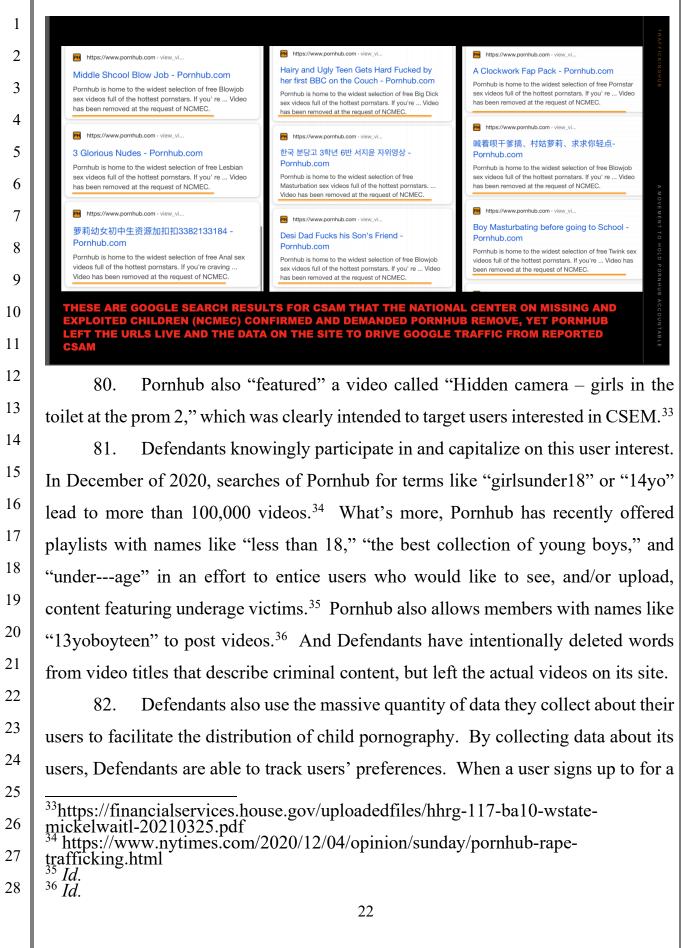
1 78. In one instance, a prepubescent victim was anally raped in a video 2 featured on Pornhub. The video was uploaded to the site three times. There is 3 documented evidence the video was reported but Pornhub did not act until someone 4 reported the content to National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Even 5 after Pornhub was forced to remove the video, it left the link, title, and tags on the 6 site to continue to drive traffic.<sup>31</sup>



79. This is not an isolated incident. There are countless other examples where Pornhub has left up links, titles and tags to videos for which NCMEC demanded removal.<sup>32</sup>

- <sup>26</sup>/<sub>31</sub> https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-117-ba10-wstatemickelwaitl-20210325.pdf
- <sup>32</sup> https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-117-ba10-wstatemickelwaitl-20210325.pdf

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1 Pornhub account, he or she is directed to fill out a survey describing their preferences, including hair, color, body art, ethnicity, and breast size. The user describes their 2 sex, sexual preference, and whether they are single or part of a couple. The user is 3 4 also presented with dozens of Pornhub categories to choose from, including "babysitter," "college," and "school" categories. Pornhub also recommends that 5 6 users sign up to follow certain channels, "pornstars," and community members to better target the content they receive. And, of course, Pornhub asks whether a user 7 prefers to view "professional" or "homemade" videos. Pornhub then uses this 8 9 information to target users with videos that suit their preferences.

83. Even for users who don't voluntarily provide all of this data to Pornhub, 10 Pornhub acquires a significant amount of data. Whenever a user views a page on 11 12 Pornhub, the website automatically receives their IP address, how full their battery is, what browser version they are using, their time zone, their system fonts, their 13 screen resolution, and what plugins they have installed.<sup>37</sup> This allows Pornhub to 14 create a digital fingerprint that tracks users over time and across websites. As 15 16 Pornhub learns more about its users' preferences, it suggests videos it thinks they will like. So if a user indicates a preference for child pornography, Pornhub 17 intentionally directs that user to its illegal content. 18

20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 <sup>37</sup> https://www.vice.com/en/article/kzmmpa/pornhub-xhamster-data-about-you 23

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1 84. Besides the entirely inadequate verification process described above, until very recently, Defendants' only "protection" against the posting of underage 2 content and other illegal content is that they hire certain moderators who view "every 3 4 video and photo uploaded to Pornhub." 5 A pornhub.com 6 7 -l've seen some comments say you allow underaged content 8 and illegal content to be posted, 9 is that true? 10 11 There has been misinformation circling on social media about our policies and procedures that we would like to 12 clarify. Some of this stems from groups committed to abolishing the sex industry who may misrepresent these 13 policies and procedures. First and foremost, illegal content is strictly prohibited on Pornhub. This has always been the 14 case and will always be the case, and the safety of our users and models is our number one priority. 15 16 Upon upload, every video and photo uploaded to Pornhub is reviewed manually by a large and extensive team of 17 moderators looking for illegal content. This sets us apart from other platforms like Twitter or YouTube as well as other 18 adult sites and allows us to act swiftly and promptly for users who violate our Terms of Service. 19 85. Although Defendants claim the goal of content moderation is to locate 20 and prevent the streaming of child pornography and other illegal material, the truth 21

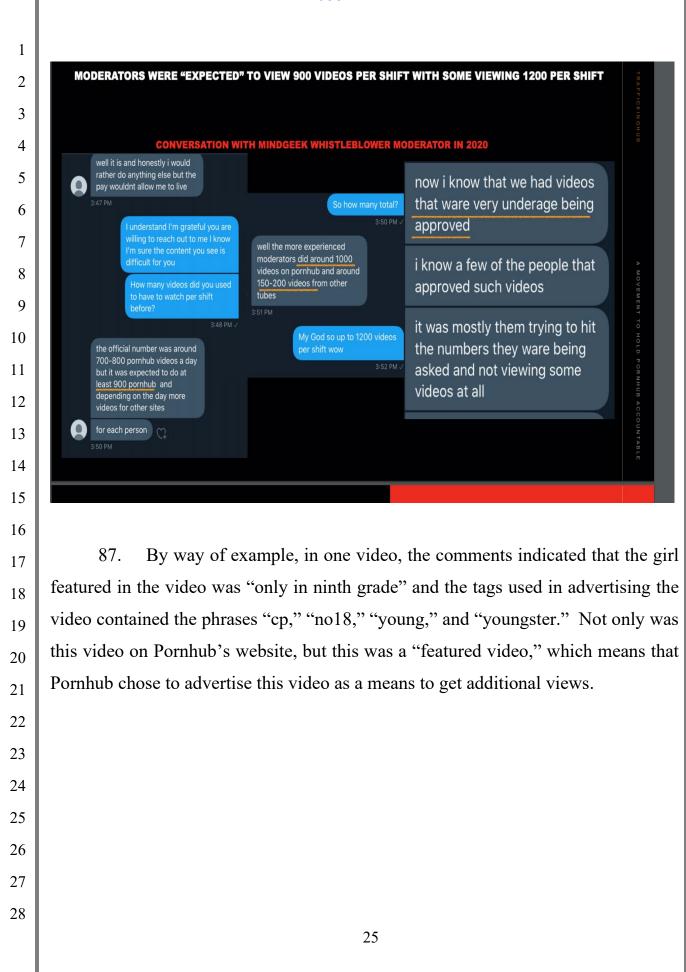
is that "the goal for a content moderator is to let as much content as possible go 22 through" because Defendants' focus is maximizing revenue.<sup>38</sup> 23

Former Pornhub moderators have confirmed that videos of "very 86. 24 underage" victims were approved because of the pressure to view as many videos as 25 possible, upwards of 1,200 videos per shift. 26

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/04/opinion/sunday/pornhub-rapetrafficking.html

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1 2 **PROMOTING AND ADVERTISING CSAM** ATURED VID Porn hub Q, 3 5:48 00.00 **ADVERTISING &** 0 4 4 DISTRIBUTING She's only in 9th grade))) BAN Шко CSAM 5 A Reply 561.785 VIEWS 4 6 6 **According to MindGeek, they** Tags:teenager, young, малолетка. Школьница, в review and approve each video лесу, торецк, торецьк, 7 before upload. Therefore, донецк, Секс, цп, молодая, нет 18, секси, реальное **MindGeek approvs videos of** домашнее, секс на улице, underage victims. This video хентай 8 identified the girl as underage in tsk. torets s, tsp, moloda va. net 18. si the comments, with the tags domashneve, seks na uli 9 "CP" and "Not 18" and yet • **Pornhub intentionally featured** 10 Tags: teenager, young, youngster, (advertised) the video in order schoolgirl, in the forest, toretsk, 5 months ago to get more views. toretsk, donetsk, sex, cp, young, , sexy, real homemade, eatured on: 5 months ago 11 outdoor sex, hentai 12

88. Defendants' profit-maximizing goal is made plain by the following: 14 Despite the fact that 1.36 million new hours of video are uploaded each year to 15 Pornhub, Defendants employ only 80 moderators across all of its websites 16 worldwide.<sup>39</sup> By contrast, Facebook has 15,000 moderators.<sup>40</sup> 17

On information and belief, only around ten people on Defendants' 89. 18 moderator team are working at any given time throughout the day. They also lack 19 any specialized training. 20

Looking just at the year 2019, according to Pornhub there were 90. 21 approximately 18,000 videos uploaded to that website daily, with an average length 22 of approximately 11 minutes each.<sup>41</sup> Assuming each of the 10 moderators were 23 focused solely on Pornhub, and worked a full 8-hour shift, they would be required to 24 review 1,800 11-minute videos every day, where they are screening for not just child 25 pornography but other inappropriate content such as bestiality and even murder. 26

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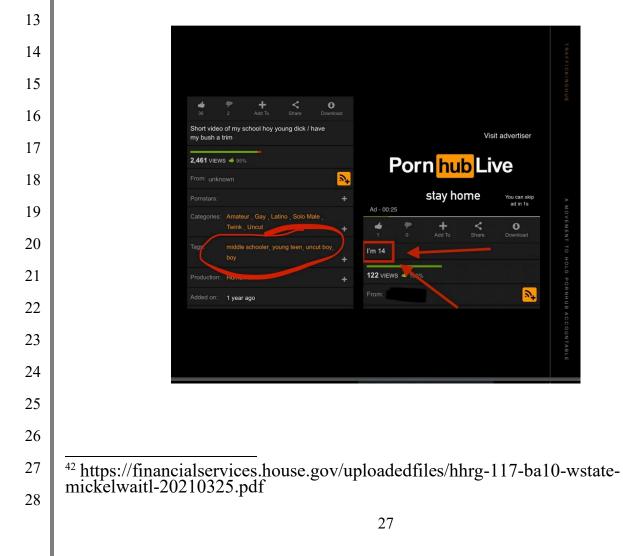
<sup>39</sup> Id. <sup>40</sup> Id. <sup>41</sup> https://www.pornhub.com/insights/2019-year-in-review 28

That's 19,800 minutes upload every day, meaning a single moderator is somehow
 required to view 2,475 minutes per hour.

91. Defendants know that that is an impossible task, and that it necessarily
leads to moderators quickly fast forwarding through, or even skipping videos/images
entirely.

92. But Defendants' business model profits from sexual videos and images
featuring underage victims, and Defendants' claim that it acts "swiftly and promptly"
when users violate its Terms of Service is belied by the many stories of victims whose
photos and videos have been streamed on Pornhub for years with no action.

93. Moderators have reviewed and approved videos with CSEM, including videos that say "I'm 14" and have tags like "middle schooler," "young teen," "boy," and "uncut boy."<sup>42</sup>



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94. Notably, on Pornhub's Modelhub page, Defendants advertise their ability to use DMCA and fingerprinting to protect pirating of videos. Meaning, when it comes to preserving revenue, Defendants have long since demonstrated both an interest and technical ability to monitor and protect against access. Despite being fully aware of the problem of child trafficking, until very recently, Defendants did not employ similarly advanced methods to filter for underage or other illegal content.<sup>43</sup>

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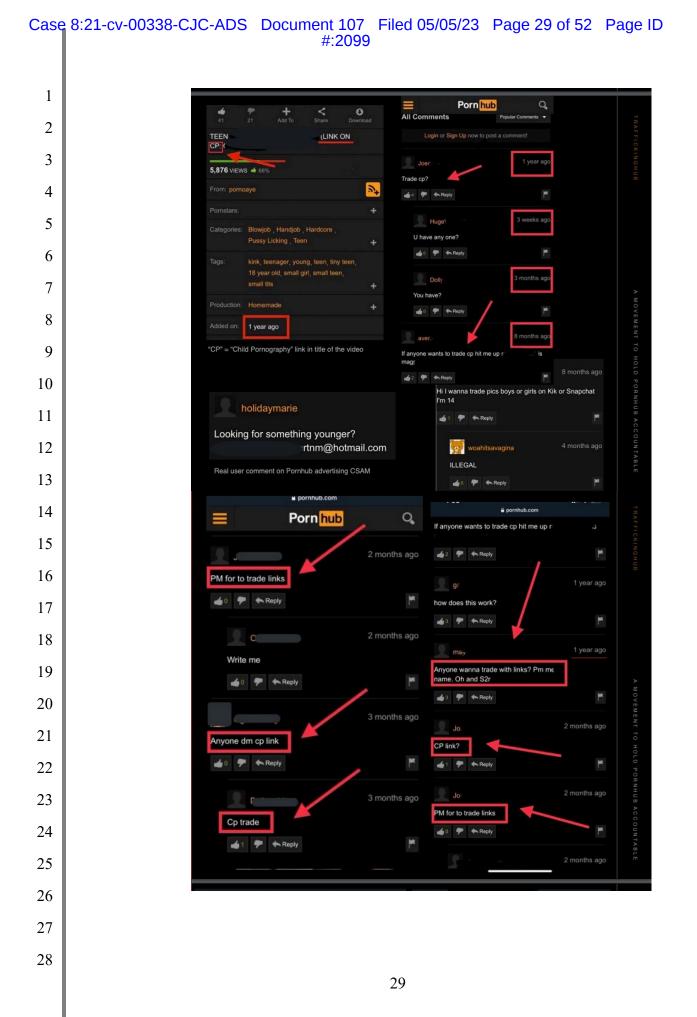
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# 3. Child Sex Trafficking is Distributed and Monetized on Pornhub

95. Countless videos have been labeled on Pornhub as "CP," which is a
well-known abbreviation for child porn, sometimes featured in the title of the video
that was reviewed by moderators. There are also many examples of users offering to
trade child porn with one another on the site.<sup>44</sup>

16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 <sup>43</sup> https://www.pornhub.com/partners/models?\_ga=2.200643118.1816855087.1613 736072-62734983.1613736072 26 43 27 https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-117-ba10-wstatemickelwaitl-20210325.pdf 28 28



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4. Defendants Have Admitted That Videos Featuring Underage Persons Are Some Of The Most Popular/Sought-After Content In Its Entire Library

96. In its explanation of "How to Succeed," on Defendants' Pornhub 4 website, Defendants direct users to use up to 16 tags that describe the video and 5 6 performers; select up to 8 relevant categories; when applicable, use niche specific categories to ensure content is visible to the "right" fans; write a creative title that 7 describes the scene, and add a stage name to the title of the video. These tactics are 8 9 all designed to generate as much traffic as possible. The more sensational the video, the more likely it is to be streamed and generate revenues. Defendants' categories 10 11 demonstrate how it is specifically targeting viewers who are interested in child pornography, with categories like "teen," "school," "babysitter" and "old/young."<sup>45</sup> 12 On the page explaining video categories, Defendants acknowledged that Teen is one 13 of its most popular categories.<sup>46</sup> 14

97. Defendants' description of what titles to use similarly reflects their
instructions to users to make titles "enticing" so that "users will be curious enough
to click!"<sup>47</sup> For example, in its explanation of a bad vs. good title selection,
Defendants describe how adding that a student is a participant in the video will entice
users to click.<sup>48</sup>

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### D. <u>Defendants Know That Its Websites Are Known For Child Sex</u> <u>Trafficking Activity</u>

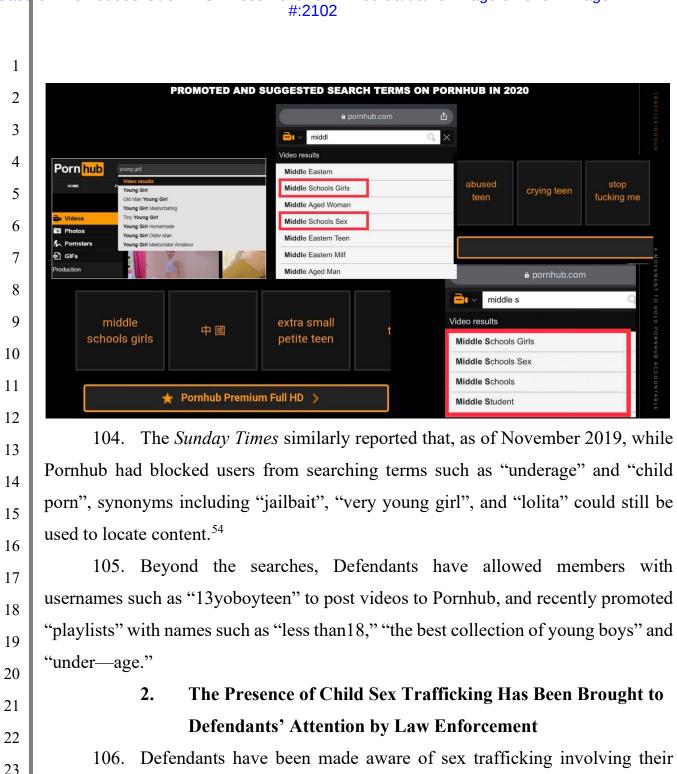
98. This is not a situation where Defendants can credibly claim ignorance.
There are numerous ways in which Defendants have been made aware of the fact that
its websites have become a go-to home for child pornography and sex trafficking.

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- <sup>45</sup> https://help.pornhub.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007986887-Video-Categories
- <sup>47</sup> https://help.pornhub.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007986747-Video-Titles

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1	1. The Presence Of Child Sex Trafficking Is Obvious From
2	Language On Defendants' Own Websites
3	99. To start, Defendants need go no further than the language used on their
4	own websites.
5	100. For example, until very recently, a simple search of Pornhub revealed
6	countless examples of the presence—and indeed aggressive marketing—of underage
7	pornography.
8	101. As just one example, the New York Times recently reported that, as of
9	December 4, 2020, a search on Pornhub for "girlunder18" led to more than 100,000
10	videos. <sup>49</sup>
11	102. Similarly, as of December 4, 2020, a search on Pornhub for "14yo" led
12	to more than 100,000 videos. <sup>50</sup> And a search for "13yo" led to approximately
13	155,000 videos. <sup>51</sup> "Girl with braces" turned up 1,913 videos and suggested to also
14	try searching for "exxxtra small teens."52
15	103. Promoted and suggested search terms on Pornhub demonstrate that
16	Pornhub is enabling sex trafficking. In 2020, promoted and suggested search terms
17	on Pornhub included "young girls," "middle school girls," "middle school sex,"
18	"middle schools," and "middle student." <sup>53</sup>
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23	<sup>49</sup> https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/04/opinion/sunday/pornhub-rape
24	trafficking.html <sup>50</sup> https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/04/opinion/sunday/pornhub-rape
25	trafficking.html <sup>51</sup> https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/04/opinion/sunday/pornhub-rape
26	trafficking.html <sup>52</sup> https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/04/opinion/sunday/pornhub-rape
27	trafficking html
28	<sup>53</sup> https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-117-ba10-wstate- mickelwaitl-20210325.pdf
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content partners, including GirlsDoPorn and Czech Casting.

107. GirlsDoPorn was a popular content partner of Pornhub where victims of
 sex trafficking were widely distributed and monetized. Even as of October 2020,

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup>https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/unilever-and-heinz-pay-for-ads-on-pornhub the-worlds-biggest-porn-site-knjzlmwzv

1 after GirlsDoPorn boss Michael Pratt was charged with federal sex trafficking crimes, a user could search "GDP" on Pornhub and find over 300 videos.55 2

108. Similarly, Czech police recently arrested the owners of another Pornhub 3 partner channel, Czech Casting, for sex trafficking. Czech AV, the company running 4 the channel, had almost one billion views on Pornhub.<sup>56</sup> The women were mostly 5 college students.<sup>57</sup> 6

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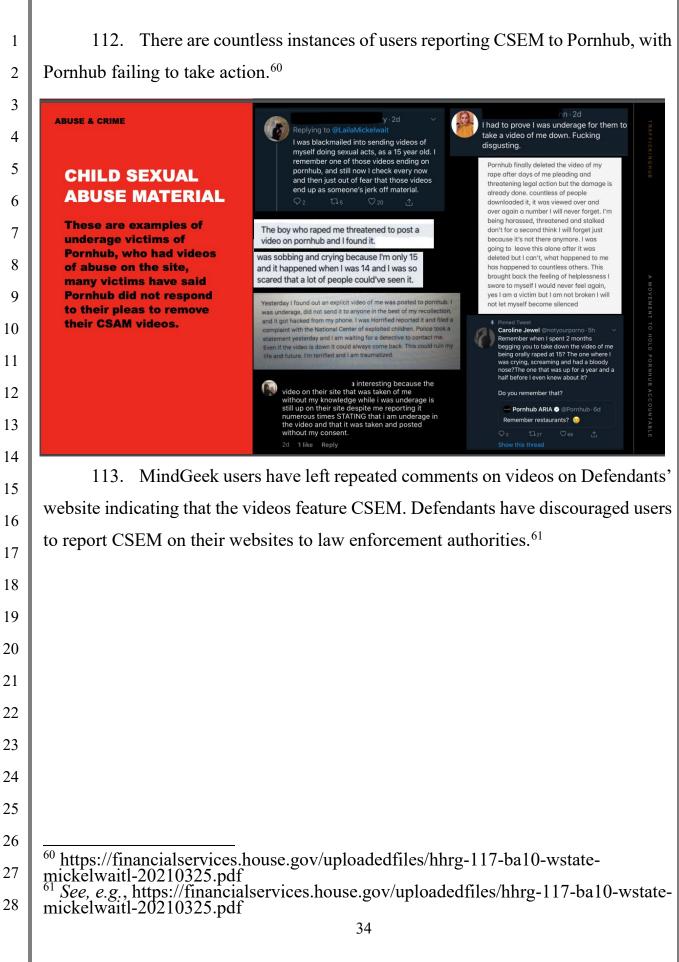
#### 3. The Presence Of Child Sex Trafficking Has Been Brought **To Defendants' Attention Via Victims**

9 109. Victims and their families have also notified Defendants of the presence of child pornography on their websites. 10

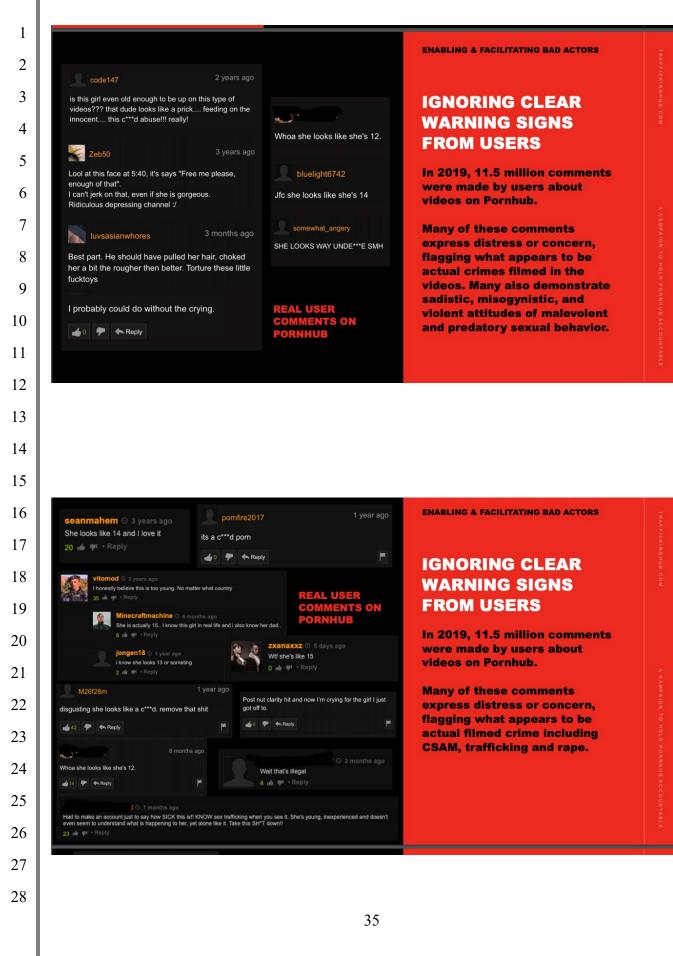
110. Serena Fleites. Ms. Fleites, aged just 14, was recorded in a sexually 11 explicit video that was then uploaded to PornHub.<sup>58</sup> In testimony before the House 12 of Commons ethics committee, she explained; "The titles would always be something 13 like 'preteen,' 'young teen.'" 14

111. Ms. Fleites further testified that it took Pornhub more than a week to 15 16 remove the video, which it only agreed to do after she was asked multiple times to prove that it was, in fact, her video and that she was underage. As she put it: "It was 17 very obvious it was a child in the video ... Even if I wasn't the girl in that video, 18 they could still tell that was a child in that video and they were still dragging out that 19 process."59 20

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- <sup>55</sup> https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-117-ba10-wstatemickelwaitl-20210325.pdf <sup>56</sup>https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-117-ba10-wstate-24
- mickelwaitl-20210325.pdf 25
- https://praguemorning.cz/czech-casting-women-lured-by-modeling-gigs-26 manipulated-into-porn/
- https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2021/02/01/child-porn-victim-testifies-27 during-day-1-of-pornhub-discussions-at-committee.html
- https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2021/02/01/child-porn-victim-testifies-28 during-day-1-of-pornhub-discussions-at-committee.html



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REAL USER COMMENTS ON	7 months ago	ENABLING & FACILITATING BAD ACTORS
PORNHUB	Do we really know sex trafficking when we see it! "EXPLOITED TEENS ASIA".She can't be older than 15 or 16. this is a real victim. In some moments she looks like she wants to cry. You can see that she doesnt want	IGNORING CLEAR WARNING SIGNS
7 months ago	this, you can see that she wishes he'd leave her alone! I can't believe 9k liked the image of an old perv humping on a helpless GIRL! Flag the fuck out of this and hospfully porthub will remove it. My heart breaks for	FROM USERS
👍 1 🥐 🛧 Reply	her. Hopefully she will be able to escape and find true love	In 2019, 11.5 million comments were made by users about videos on Pornhub.
daddysgirly 2 years ago		
I wouldn't mind if she was 14 - that's not too young for cock.	BloodlustBurrito 📀 2 years ago	Many of these comments express distress or concern,
470 ♥ ARphy VIEW ALL REPLIES (4) ∨	<b>≤</b> 12 <b>₽</b> ← Reply <b>№</b>	flagging what appears to be actual crimes filmed in the videos. Many also demonstrate
5 months ago	hard4life 🥏 9 months ago	sadistic, misogynistic, and violent attitudes of malevolent
This video is totally inappropriate! I suppose the nan is a father or family.	I can't get off to this shit, I just feel sorry for the girl she looks 12	and predatory sexual behavior.
She was crying "kurushi" meaning "painful" and she was begging him to stop!	👍 23 🎓 🐟 Reply	

114. Indeed, although Defendants are required to report CSEM to NCMEC, Defendants have utterly failed to report known instances of CSEM. For example, NCMEC publishes an annual report of reports of incidents of apparent CSEM, and although Defendants' websites were rife with CSEM at that time, MindGeek and PornHub made zero reports in 2019.<sup>62</sup>

### 4. The Presence Of Child Sex Trafficking Has Been Brought To Defendants' Attention Via Third-Party Reporting

115. Numerous media outlets have also notified Defendants of the presence of child pornography on their websites.

116. In October of 2018, numerous print outlets ranging from the *New York Post*<sup>63</sup> to the *Mercury News*<sup>64</sup> reported that an investigation was launched after a high school student recognized his classmate—a 14-year-old girl—in a video uploaded to

<sup>62</sup> https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline
 <sup>63</sup> https://nypost.com/2018/10/26/videos-on-pornhub-showed-female-teacher-

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<sup>27</sup> having-sex-with-teen-girl-cops/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/10/26/pornhub-videos-lead-to-redwoodcity-womans-arrest/

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Pornhub. The video depicted the young girl being sexually assaulted by a substitute teacher. The classmate notified the principal, who in turn contacted authorities.

117. Just one month later, in November 2019, the Sunday Times of London 3 published an investigation in which it questioned Pornhub's claim that it "bans 4 content showing under-18s and removes it swiftly."<sup>65</sup> It reported that, in just minutes 5 of searching on the website, it was able to find dozens of examples of illegal material. 6 Including an entire account called "Candid teen asses," devoted to posting covertly 7 filmed "creepshots" of girls in their school uniforms.<sup>66</sup> And then there were the 8 videos featuring victims as young as three years old.<sup>67</sup> 9

118. Many of the videos the newspaper located had more than 350,000 views, 10 and had been on the platform for years.<sup>68</sup> 11

119. Even after the Sunday Times flagged certain specific videos for 12 Defendants, three of the worst clips remained on Pornhub some 24 hours later.<sup>69</sup> 13

120. In September 2020, a man in Tuscaloosa was charged with monetizing 14 child exploitation on Pornhub, producing porn involving a 16-year-old girl.<sup>70</sup> The 15 video was on Pornhub for two years and viewed 2,447 times before it was finally 16 taken down. 17

121. In 2018, Dawn Gianni sexually assaulted a 14-year-old girl and the 18 19 videos were uploaded to Pornhub.<sup>71</sup>

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- https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/unilever-and-heinz-pay-for-ads-on-pornhub-23 the-worlds-biggest-porn-site-knjzlmwzv Id.
- <sup>67</sup> *Id*. 24
- <sup>68</sup> *Id*. 25 Id.
- https://abc3340.com/news/local/pornhub-account-tied-to-tuscaloosa-mans-arrest-26 for-producing-porn-with-a-
- Court%20records%20show%2027%2Dyear,with%20bond%20set% minor#:~:text 20at%20%2475%2C000. <sup>71</sup>https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/10/26/pornhub-videos-lead-to-redwood-27
- 28 city-womans-arrest/

122. News reports also indicated that images of Megan Guthrie when she was
17 years old were featured on Pornhub and her name was trending on the site.<sup>72</sup>

123. More recently, *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof wrote a lengthy article entitled: "The Children of Pornhub: Why does Canada allow this company to profit off videos of exploitation and assault?" That article is described in more detail below.

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### 5. The Presence of Child Sex Trafficking Has Been Brought To Defendants' Attention Via Advocacy Groups

9 124. Numerous advocacy groups have devoted significant resources to
10 bringing attention to the ubiquitous problem of child pornography on Defendants'
11 various websites.

12 125. The Internet Watch Foundation, which assesses and works to remove
13 from the internet child sexual abuse images and videos every year, reported that it
14 found 118 instances of child sexual abuse imagery on Pornhub between 1 January
15 2017, and 29 October 2019.<sup>73</sup>

16 126. TraffickingHub has also launched a worldwide campaign to bring
17 attention to Defendants' bad acts, including gathering over 2 million signatures for a
18 petition to shut down Pornhub and hold its executives accountable for aiding
19 trafficking.<sup>74</sup>

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### 6. The Presence of Child Sex Trafficking Has Been Brought to Defendants' Attention Via Government-Led Investigations

127. The governments of multiple countries have also become involved in
this issue, launching investigations into the Pornhub's wrongdoing.

128. In the United States, Senator Ben Sasse wrote to U.S. Attorney General
Bill Barr, calling for a federal investigation into Pornhub and its owner MindGeek

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<sup>72</sup>https://www.buzzfeed.com/cameronwilson/tiktok-underage-nudes-leakedharassment

<sup>73</sup> https://www.iwf.org.uk/news/pornhub-data-out-of-context-tells-us-nothing
 <sup>74</sup> https://traffickinghub.com/

1 for their involvement in streaming videos of raped and exploited women and children. In his letter he explained: 2

In several notable incidents over the past year, Pornhub 3 made content available worldwide showing women and 4 girls that were victims of trafficking being raped and 5 exploited. Indeed, the problem of Pornhub streaming 6 content featuring women and children victims of sex 7 trafficking reached the point in November that Paypal cut 8 9 off services for Pornhub, refusing to facilitate this abuse any longer... Pornhub must not escape scrutiny. I 10 therefore request that the Department open an 11 investigation into Pornhub and its parent entity MindGeek 12 Holding SARL for their involvement in this disturbing 13 pipeline of exploiting children and other victims and 14 survivors of sex trafficking.<sup>75</sup> 15

16 129. The same calls for action are being heard in Canada, where Canadian Members of Parliament from four parties sent an open letter to Canada's Minister of 17 Justice, Attorney General David Lametti, along with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, 18 demanding a government response to what is happening on Pornhub.<sup>76</sup> 19

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#### E. The New York Times Investigation

21 130. Despite their apparent knowledge of this growing problem, for over a 22 decade, Defendants took no action.

131. Then, in December 2020, Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times 23 published a detailed investigation that chronicled all the ways Pornhub monetizes 24 child rapes and revenge pornography.<sup>77</sup> "The site is infested with rape videos," 25

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> https://www.sasse.senate.gov/public/\_cache/files/06557325-43d1-4aed-8e34-27cf8cbdfb13/3-10-20-sasse-letter-to-ag-barr.pdf
 <sup>76</sup> https://twitter.com/ArnoldViersen/status/1331647921692041216?s=20
 <sup>77</sup> https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/04/opinion/sunday/pornhub-rape-26 27

<sup>28</sup> trafficking.html

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1 Kristof wrote. "It monetizes child rapes, revenge pornography, spy cam videos of women showering, racist and misogynist content, and footage of women being 2 asphyxiated in plastic bags." 3

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132. Kristof wrote that there are more than 6.8 million new videos posted on Pornhub each year, many of which depict child abuse.

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133. The story referenced a woman named Cali who was forced to appear in pornographic videos beginning at the age of nine, many of which ended up on 7 Pornhub and regularly reappear there. Kristof described how he came across many 8 9 videos on Pornhub featuring unconscious girls, with rapists opening the eyelids of the victims and touching their eyeballs to demonstrate that they were, in fact, 10 unconscious.

134. Kristof wrote: "In the last few days as I was completing this article, two 12 new videos of prepubescent girls being assaulted were posted, along with a sex video 13 of a 15-year-old girl who was suicidal after it went online. I don't see how good-14 faith moderators could approve any of these videos." 15

135. Of course, the problem is that the moderators are not acting in good 16 faith. They are trying to get as much content through as possible to ensure traffic, 17 because traffic equals profits. 18

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#### **Financial Institutions Cut Ties with Defendants** F.

20 136. Kristof's article called for Visa, Mastercard, and American Express to suspend cooperation with Pornhub. Mastercard launched its own investigation into 21 Kristof's claims and said it found them to be substantiated. In a statement, 22 Mastercard said: "The use of our cards at Pornhub is being terminated. Our 23 investigation over the past several days has confirmed violations of our standards 24 prohibiting unlawful content on their site. As a result, and in accordance with our 25

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1 policies, we instructed the financial institutions that connect the site to our network to terminate acceptance."<sup>78</sup> 2

137. Visa followed suit. Although its investigation is ongoing, Visa 3 suspended Pornhub's acceptance privileges while its investigation is underway and 4 instructed the financial institutions who serve Defendants to suspend processing of 5 payments through the Visa network.<sup>79</sup> 6

138. Discover also cut ties with Pornhub. "We require our financial 7 institution partners to monitor for and prevent card acceptance at merchants that 8 9 allow illegal or any other prohibited activities that violate our operating standards," Discover said in a statement. "When Discover determines merchants are offering 10 11 prohibited activity, we promptly terminate card acceptance through the offending merchant's financial institution."80 12

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#### **Defendants Remove Millions of Videos from Their Sites** G.

139. Within days of the financial institutions cutting ties with Pornhub, 14 Defendants finally took some action. Most notably, they removed all content 15 16 previously uploaded to its Pornhub website by unverified users, bringing the total number of videos on that one site down from 13 million to 4 million.<sup>81</sup> On 17 information and belief, they did nothing, however, to confirm that any of the 18 individuals featured in any of the 4 million videos that remained on the website were 19 20 of consenting adults.

21 140. Defendants also announced that they were removing the ability for users 22 to download content from Pornhub (with the exception of paid downloads from the 23 "verified" Model Program), along with other changes. Despite these announcements,

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<sup>78</sup> https://www.cnn.com/2020/12/14/business/mastercard-visa-discover-26 pornhub/index.html , *Id.* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/dec/14/pornhub-purge-removes-unverified-videos-investigation-child-abuse 28

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as evidenced in paragraphs 47-54 above, nothing substantive appears to have
 changed because the Model Program has no age verification requirement.<sup>82</sup>

IV. JANE DOE'S EXPER

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. <u>JANE DOE'S EXPERIENCE AS A VICTIM OF DEFENDANTS' SEX</u> <u>TRAFFICKING</u>

141. Jane Doe was in high school when her boyfriend created four videos of
the two of them engaging in sexual intercourse. She was sixteen years old at the time
the videos were recorded, and some of the videos were recorded without her
knowledge let alone consent. She was induced to perform the sex acts depicted in the
videos.

10 142. The relationship ended when Jane Doe's boyfriend pushed her out of his
11 moving car onto the street, dragging her until she was able to free herself.

12 143. After the relationship ended, Jane Doe learned from a mutual friend that
13 her ex-boyfriend has posted multiple videos online of the two of them engaging in
14 sexual intercourse. Jane Doe is clearly identifiable in the videos, which were posted
15 to various websites, including Pornhub.com and Redtube.com, from the period of
16 December 2019 to the present.

17 144. The postings were accompanied by crude, disparaging, misogynistic18 and/or racist remarks.

19 145. After allowing the videos to be uploaded to Pornhub, Defendants loaded
20 at least one of the videos to Redtube. The video contained the name "teen" in the
21 title, was tagged with the word "teen" and was categorized as "teen" porn to enable
22 users who were interested in child pornography to locate the video. The video has
23 been viewed more than 30,000 times and was featured alongside Traffic Junky
24 advertisements.

146. What's more, not only did Defendants upload this video to Redtube,
they actually *featured* it on the front page of Redtube in order to drive traffic.

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<sup>82</sup> https://www.pornhub.com/blog/11422

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1 147. The circulation of the videos and images has caused Ms. Doe great anxiety, distress and sleeplessness. She has had recurring thoughts of contemplating 2 suicide and feelings of hopelessness, resulting in withdrawing from school and 3 4 seeking therapy. Ms. Doe has spent money on counseling resulting from her distress.

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148. The videos were on Pornhub for nearly a month before Jane Doe was 6 made aware of them. Ms. Doe immediately reached out to Pornhub to have the videos taken down on March 26, 2020. While Pornhub ultimately removed the 7 videos, they warned Ms. Doe: "We have taken it upon ourselves to fingerprint the 8 9 content with Vobile on your behalf. This should effectively block future uploads of 10 the videos. Please note that we offer no guarantee. We do not operate the Vobile 11 service. Furthermore we recommend that you educate yourself on their services and the limitations of digital fingerprinting technology." 12

149. Apparently it is on Ms. Doe to ensure that the videos are never uploaded 13 anew to Pornhub, or any of Defendants' numerous other websites, again. 14

150. Jane Doe No. 1's trafficker has victimized other young women as well. 15 After law enforcement authorities arrested her trafficker, they located more than 500 16 images and videos that had been uploaded to Pornhub, Redtube, and other websites. 17

151. Defendants financially benefitted from Jane Doe No. 1's trafficking in 18 19 the form of increased traffic and advertising revenue.

20 152. Defendants made money on the videos featuring Ms. Doe's image and 21 likeness without her permission or consent.

22 153. Ms. Doe suffered economic injury because she was not compensated for Defendants' use of her image and likeness for commercial gain. 23

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#### **CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS**

154. Plaintiff brings this action on her own behalf, and on behalf of a class 25 26 pursuant to Rule 23(a) and (b)(3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. The Class is defined as: 27

all persons who were under the age of 18 when they appeared in a video or image that has been uploaded or otherwise made available for viewing on any website owned or operated by Defendants in the last ten years.

- 155. Plaintiff also brings this action on behalf of: all persons residing in California who were under the age of 18 when they appeared in a video or image that has been uploaded or otherwise made available for viewing on any website owned or operated by Defendants in the last ten years (the "California Subclass").
- 10 156. The members of the Class are so numerous that joinder of all members
  11 is impracticable. While the exact number of Class members is unknown to Plaintiff
  12 at this time and can only be ascertained through appropriate discovery, Plaintiff
  13 believes that there are many thousand members of the Class. Absent members of the
  14 Class may be notified of the pendency of this action using a form of notice similar to
  15 that customarily used in purchaser class actions.
- 16 157. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the members of the Class,
  17 as all members of the Class were similarly affected by Defendants' wrongful
  18 common course of conduct complained of herein.
- 19 158. Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the members
  20 of the Class and has retained counsel competent and experienced in class action
  21 litigation.
- 159. Common questions of law and fact exist as to all members of the Class
  and predominate over any questions solely affecting individual members of the Class.
  Among the questions of law and fact common to the Class are:
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 (a) Whether Defendants knowingly benefitted from child trafficking;

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(b) Whether user-generated uploads on Defendants' websites feature underage victims;

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1	(c) Whether Defendants knew or should have known that there were
2	videos and/or images of underage victims on its websites; and
3	(d) Whether Defendants' age verification system prevents users
4	from uploading child pornography.
5	(e) Whether Defendants have earned profits from child trafficking;
6	160. A class action is superior to all other available methods for the fair and
7	efficient adjudication of this controversy, since joinder of all members is
8	impracticable. The damages suffered by individual Class members may be relatively
9	small, the expense and burden of individual litigation makes it virtually impossible
10	as a practical matter for members of the Class to redress individually the wrongs done
11	to them. There will be no difficulty in the management of this action as a class action.
12	FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF
13	TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PROTECTION ACT
14	<u>18 U.S.C. §§ 1591, 1595</u>
15	(Against All Defendants)
16	161. Plaintiff incorporates each and every allegation set forth above as if fully
17	set forth herein.
18	162. Defendants knowingly used the instrumentalities of interstate commerce
19	to violate 18 U.S.C. § 1595.
20	163. Defendants knowingly benefit from child trafficking by benefitting
21	financially from videos/images viewable on their websites that depict victims who
22	are underage. Defendants make substantial profits with almost three billion ad
23	impressions each day, many of which are attributable to content posted of underage
24	victims.
25	164. Defendants recruit, entice, harbor, transport, provide, obtain, advertise,
26	maintain, patronize, or solicit videos and images depicting CSEM on their websites.
27	
21	165. Defendants knew or should have known that the videos and images

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aware of the child pornography on their websites by victim's complaints, third-party
 reporting, advocacy groups, and government investigations. Defendants knew or
 should have known that their websites are known for child sex trafficking based on
 all of this information.

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166. Defendants monetized child trafficking on their websites through revenues generated by subscriptions and advertisements.

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167. Rather than take action to combat the problem of child sex trafficking, Defendants intentionally catered their websites to facilitate sex trafficking and make it easier for traffickers to monetize underage victims in commercial sex acts.

168. Defendants not only maintained affiliations with sex traffickers by 10 11 enabling the posting of child pornography on their websites, they have strengthened those affiliations by making it easier to connect traffickers with those who want to 12 view child pornography. Defendants create playlists that target those interested in 13 child pornography; feature categories on their websites that target users interested in 14 child pornography; instructs users to describe their videos using categories like 15 16 "teen" to drive traffic; and decline to take down child pornography that generates significant streams. 17

18 169. Defendants have repeatedly featured victims who have not attained the
age of 18 years in videos/images on its websites. The victims have engaged in
commercial sex acts because all of the videos featured on its websites generate
revenue for Defendants and/or traffickers and depict sex acts.

170. Defendants had a reasonable opportunity to observe the victims featured
on its websites, including because their moderators had the opportunity to view all of
the content posted thereon.

25 171. Defendants' conduct has harmed the Class by causing physical,
26 psychological, financial, and reputational harm.

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1	SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF
2	<b>RECEIPT AND DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY</b>
3	<u>18 U.S.C. §§ 2252A, 2255</u>
4	(Against All Defendants)
5	172. Plaintiff incorporates each and every allegation set forth above as if fully
6	set forth herein.
7	173. Defendants knowingly and intentionally offer, operate, maintain and
8	advertise child pornography on their websites. Defendants also knowingly and
9	intentionally encourage traffic on their websites and encourage advertisers to
10	purchase advertisement space thereon.
11	174. Defendants knowingly received and distributed child pornography
12	depicting Plaintiff and the Class on their websites in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2252A.
13	Accordingly, Plaintiff and the Class are entitled to bring a civil action under
14	18 U.S.C. §§ 2252A(f), 2255(a).
15	175. Defendants' receipt and distribution of child pornography occurred in
16	or affected interstate or foreign commerce.
17	176. As a proximate result of Defendants' violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2252A,
18	Plaintiff and the Class have suffered serious harm including, without limitation,
19	physical, psychological, financial, and reputational harm.
20	177. Defendants' conduct was malicious, oppressive, or in reckless disregard
21	of Plaintiff's rights and the Class' rights and Plaintiff and the Class are entitled to
22	injunctive relief, compensatory, liquidated, statutory and punitive damages, and the
23	costs of maintaining this action. 18 U.S.C. §§ 2252A(f), 2255(a).
24	178. Defendants' liability for knowingly violating 18 U.S.C. § 2252A is not
25	limited by 47 U.S.C. § 230 because nothing in Section 230 "shall be construed to
26	impair the enforcement of [] chapter [ ] 110 (relating to sexual exploitation of
27	children) [] or any other Federal criminal statute." 47 U.S.C. § 230(e)(1).
28	

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1	THIRD CLAIM FOR RELIEF
2	DISTRIBUTION OF PRIVATE SEXUALLY EXPLICIT
2	MATERIALS, CAL. CIV. CODE § 1708.85
4	(Against All Defendants)
5	(On behalf of California Subclass)
6	179. Plaintiff incorporates each and every allegation set forth above as if fully
7	set forth herein.
8	180. Defendants intentionally distributed child pornography.
9	181. Plaintiff and the Class did not consent to the online distribution of the
10	videos and images depicting them.
11	182. Defendants knew Plaintiff and the Class had a reasonable expectation
12	that the videos depicting them would remain private.
13	183. The videos depicted on Pornhub exposed intimate body parts of Plaintiff
14	and the Class.
15	184. Plaintiff and the Class were harmed by Defendants' knowing and
16	intentional distribution of child pornography and Defendants' conduct was a
17	substantial factor in causing harm to Plaintiff and the Class.
18	FOURTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF
19	VIOLATION OF CALIFORNIA'S UNFAIR COMPETITION LAW ("UCL")
20	<u>Cal. Bus. &amp; Prof. Code § 17200</u>
21	(Against All Defendants)
22	(On behalf of California Subclass)
23	185. Plaintiff incorporates each and every allegation set forth above as if fully
24	set forth herein.
25	186. Defendants have violated the UCL by engaging in unlawful, unfair, and
26	fraudulent business acts and practices.
27	187. Defendants knowingly had inadequate age verification systems in place
28	that enabled users to upload child pornography to Defendants' websites. 48
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1	188. Defendants profited by selling advertising space to display
2	advertisements alongside Plaintiff's and the Class's videos, images, and likenesses
3	without their consent (or the consent of their parents or legal guardians).
4	189. Defendants profited by featuring Plaintiff's and the Class's videos,
5	images, and likenesses without their consent to drive user traffic to their websites.
6	190. Defendants' conduct constitutes an unlawful, unfair, and fraudulent
7	business act and practice.
8	191. Plaintiff and the Class have a financial interest in the use of their videos,
9	images, and likenesses.
10	192. As a result of Defendants' use of their videos, images, and likenesses
11	without their consent, Plaintiff and the Class lost money to which they were entitled.
12	193. As a result of Defendants' use of her videos, image, and likeness without
13	their consent, Plaintiff and the Class suffered financial harm in the form of costs for
14	therapy.
15	194. Plaintiff and the Class seek restitution of all amounts to which
16	Defendants have been unjustly enriched as a result of their unlawful, unfair, and/or
17	fraudulent acts.
18	FIFTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF
19	VIOLATION OF CALIFORNIA'S TRAFFICKING VICTIMS
20	PROTECTION ACT
21	<u>Cal. Civ. Code § 52.5</u>
22	(On behalf of California Subclass)
23	195. Plaintiff incorporates each and every allegation set forth above as if fully
24	set forth herein.
25	196. By knowingly maintaining and profiting from CSEM on its websites,
26	Defendants have caused minors to engage in commercial sex acts.
27	197. Defendants intend to, and do, distribute CSEM, which depicts minors
28	engaged in and/or simulating sexual conduct, through their websites. 49
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1 198. Defendants' websites are available all over the country, including in
 2 California.

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#### **SIXTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF**

### **INTENTIONAL INFLICTION OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS**

5 199. Plaintiff incorporates each and every allegation set forth above as if fully
6 set forth herein.

7 200. Defendants' conduct toward Plaintiff and the Class, as described herein,
8 was outrageous and extreme.

9 201. A reasonable person would not expect a company like Defendants to
10 knowingly tolerate child sex trafficking and pornography on its websites.
11 Defendants' callous indifference to the child sexual abuse occurring on its websites
12 goes beyond all possible bounds of decency.

202. Defendants acted with reckless disregard of the likelihood that Plaintiff
and the Class would suffer emotional distress, including humiliation and anxiety.
Defendants knew, or recklessly disregarded, that Plaintiff and the Class were harmed
by the illegal CSEM featuring them on Defendants' websites, but did nothing to help
them, and instead tacitly encouraged the proliferation of CSEM on its websites.

203. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' conduct, Plaintiff and
the Class suffered severe emotional distress and are accordingly entitled to
appropriate damages.

21 204. No reasonable person in Plaintiff's situation would be able to adequately
22 endure the distress engendered by Defendants' profit-driven indifference to, and
23 encouragement of, her plight.

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### PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for judgment, as follows:

A. Determine that this action is a proper class action under Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and appointing Plaintiff's counsel as Class counsel;

1	B. Award injunctive relief sufficient to bring Defendants' policies in
2	compliance with applicable law.
3	C. Award compensatory, liquidated, statutory, and punitive damages,
4	disgorgement, and restitution in favor of Plaintiff and the Class against all
5	Defendants, jointly and severally, for all damages sustained as a result of defendants'
6	violations of the law, in an amount to be proven at trial, including prejudgment
7	interest thereon.
8	D. Award Plaintiff and the Class reasonable attorneys' fees, costs and
9	expenses incurred in this action, including expert fees.
10	E. Award such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and
11	proper.
12	Dated: May 5, 2023 DAVIDA BROOK
13	KRYSTA KAUBLE PACHMAN TAMAR LUSZTIG
14	HALLEY JOSEPHS AMY B. GREGORY
15	SUSMAN GODFREY L.L.P.
16	STEVE COHEN ( <i>Pro Hac Vice</i> ) scohen@pollockcohen.com
17	POLLOCK COHEN LLP 60 Broad Street, 24th Fl.
18	New York, NY 10004 Phone: (212) 337-5361
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20	By <u>/s/ Krysta Kauble Pachman</u> Krysta Kauble Pachman
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22	Attorneys for Plaintiff
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25 26	
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1	JURY DEMAND
2	Pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 38(b), Plaintiff demands trial by jury of all of the
3	claims asserted in this complaint so triable.
4 5	Dated: May 5, 2023 DAVIDA BROOK KRYSTA KAUBLE PACHMAN TAMAR LUSZTIG
6	HALLEY JOSEPHS AMY B. GREGORY SUSMAN GODFREY L.L.P.
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8	STEVE COHEN POLLOCK COHEN LLP
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10	By <u>/s/ Krysta Kauble Pachman</u> Krysta Kauble Pachman
11	Attorneys for Plaintiff
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