

Talking Points

H.3892: An Act relative to mental health promotion through realistic advertising images

Sponsored by: Massachusetts Rep. Kay Khan

1. Many of the advertisement images we are exposed to everyday are more often than not digitally manipulated. These types of manipulated images are called “digitally altered advertisements” (DAA) and include ad images where a human model’s skin tone, skin texture including wrinkles, body size, or body shape are changed. Digitally altering models’ images is standard practice in the industry.¹⁻⁴
 - 95% of US teens ages 13 and 17 years have access to a smartphone.⁵ With increasing technological advances, children and adolescents are being bombarded by new and often harmful DAA images every day.
2. Exposure to these unrealistic images can negatively impact mental and emotional health by increasing the risk of eating disorder symptoms⁵ and body and appearance dissatisfaction.⁶⁻⁷
 - Many studies show that women who view media images promoting an unrealistically thin ideal develop greater dissatisfaction with their own bodies.⁶ Research shows that the more young people view these images, the more serious their body dissatisfaction and eating disorder symptoms.⁷
3. In addition to DAA having severe and detrimental impacts to mental and emotional health, DAA also negatively affect physical health.
 - DAA that lighten the skin tones of models of color are harmful by promoting unrealistic, Eurocentric beauty standards for youth of color.⁸ A recent study of African American and Indian women found greater skin-tone preoccupation and dissatisfaction predicted greater use of unhealthy products that lighten one’s skin tone.⁹ These skin lightening products can be carcinogenic and caustic, permanently damaging skin and kidneys.¹⁰
4. In 2011, the American Medical Association issued a statement strongly encouraging advertisers to refrain from digitally altering images.¹¹ Massachusetts lawmakers need to take action by incentivizing businesses to use more realistic ad images of models of a diversity of sizes, race/ethnicity groups, and ages.
 - Massachusetts State Representative Kay Khan (D-Newton) has introduced House bill 3892 that, if passed, would provide a tax credit up to \$10,000 for personal care, cosmetic, and apparel companies that abstain from using digitally altered advertisements.

References

1. Erlanger S. Point, Shoot, Retouch and Label? - The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/03/fashion/03Boyer.html>. Accessed May 13, 2019.
2. Farid H. Seeing is not believing. *IEEE Spectr.* 2009;46(8):44-51.
3. Kee E, Farid H. A perceptual metric for photo retouching. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A.* 2011;108(50):19907-19912.
4. Seigel J. The Lash Stand – Adweek. <https://www.adweek.com/digital/lash-stand-140785/>. Accessed May 13, 2019.
5. Anderson M, Jiang J. Teens, Social Media & Technology Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/>. Accessed November 14, 2019.
6. Groesz LM, Levine MP, Murnen SK. The effect of experimental presentation of thin media images on body satisfaction: A meta-analytic review. *Int J Eat Disord.* 2002;31(1):1-16.
7. Stice, E., Schupak-Neuberg, E., Shaw, H.E., & Stein, R.I. (1994). Relation of media exposure to eating disorder symptomatology: An examination of mediating mechanisms. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 103, 836-840.
8. McBride C, Costello N, Ambwani S, Wilhite B, Austin S. Digital manipulation of images of models' appearance in mass media: Strategies for action through law and corporate social responsibility incentives to protect public health. *Am J Law Med.* 2019;45(1):7-31.
9. Choma, B. L., & Prusaczyk, E. (2018). The Effects of System Justifying Beliefs on Skin-Tone Surveillance, Skin-Color Dissatisfaction, and Skin-Bleaching Behavior. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 42(2), 162–177.
10. Craddock, N., Dlova, N., & Diedrichs, P. C. (2018). Colourism: A Global Adolescent Health Concern. *Current Opinion in Pediatrics*, 30(4), 472-477.
11. H-60.928 Body Image and Advertising to Youth | AMA. [https://policysearch.ama-assn.org/policyfinder/detail/body image?uri=%2FAMADoc%2FHOD.xml-0-5022.xml](https://policysearch.ama-assn.org/policyfinder/detail/body%20image?uri=%2FAMADoc%2FHOD.xml-0-5022.xml). Accessed May 9, 2019