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**Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives**

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BLUE DOG COALITION

January 11, 2010

The Honorable Julius Genachowski,  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

**0025**

Re: *Empowering Parents and Protecting Children in an Evolving Media Landscape*, MB  
Docket No. 09-194

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I write to submit my comments about my concerns regarding the effects that violent and otherwise inappropriate media can have on the development of our nation's youth. Specifically, I am concerned about the effect that violent video games can have, especially as the use of video games become more prominent in our society. I have long advocated stricter regulation for video games that display violent or sexually inappropriate material, having introduced and sponsored several pieces of legislation on this topic during my time in Congress.

Over the past 30 years our country has seen dramatic advancements in the technology, performance, capability, and use of video game systems. 30 years ago, children were limited to playing a simple game of Pong. Today, users can play a game of Madden Football against each other even if they are on different sides of the country. And, while the advancement of these games should be applauded, the growing use and time spent with these products should continue to be tightly monitored.

In the past decade there have been many studies linking increased video game use to obesity, decreased motivation and social skills, and aggressive behavior. All of these studies are incredibly troubling, and I fear that unless more is done to curb the increased dependency on video games, these links will be more become stronger and more pronounced.

***Detrimental Physical Effects***

According to a report issued by the American Medical Association released in 1983, there has been a considerable amount of evidence gathered linking epileptic seizure with



playing video games. In a population study based in the United Kingdom in 1993, this phenomenon was more prevalent in children between the ages of 7 and 19 than the rest of the population.

Moreover, as the time spent playing video games increases among our nation's youth, the obesity rate among our children continues to grow as many studies have found. This seems perfectly logical, as spending time playing video games will obviously not allow a child to expend the energy that it would take to play outside with friends.

### ***Detrimental Behavioral Effects***

Recent studies have also found signs of addiction in children and other individuals who spend increased time gaming. Earlier this year, a study from Iowa State University found that 8.5% of American youths ages 8 to 18 who play video games show multiple signs of behavioral addiction. Symptoms of gaming addiction include spending increased amounts of time on playing or purchasing video games; irritability/restlessness when play is scaled back; skipping chores or homework in order to play more; and lying about the length of playing time. As a result of this addiction, the study found that the children had trouble paying attention in class and performed worse in school.

Additionally, there is a growing argument that can be made for a link between the playing of violent video games and aggressive behavior. Recent studies from the *Pediatrics Journal*, University of Indiana, University of Missouri, and Michigan State University all point to a neurological link between playing violent video games and aggressive behavior in children.

### ***Industry's Attempts***

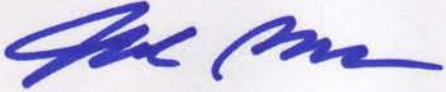
The video game industry has undertaken attempts to regulate their products, employing the ESRB rating system which works similar to the MPAA rating system for motion pictures. However, while all games possess a rating label on the cover of the game, the game's content often does not reflect its rating, with games that possess child-friendly ratings possessing violent or otherwise inappropriate content.

I fear that the loopholes and inaccuracies that exist within the rating system will never be fully addressed simply because of who implements these ratings. The video game industry is one driven by profit, not a duty to look out for the best interests of the American family. Our government must do everything they can to hold the industry accountable to ensure parents are aware of the detrimental effects that violent games can have before making decisions as to which games are appropriate for their children.

Last year, I introduced H.R. 231, the Video Game Health Labeling Act of 2009. This bill creates a new rule within the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) that mandates all video games with an Electronics Software Ratings Board (ESRB) rating of Teen (T) or higher be sold with a simple warning label which reads: ***"WARNING: Excessive exposure to violent video games and other violent media has been linked to aggressive behavior."***

As your commission examines this initiative, I ask that you consider this bill and how it will aid parents in protecting their children from potential pitfalls of evolving media. Only through comprehensive policy can we successfully ensure that parents protect their children to the best of their ability.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Baca", with a stylized flourish at the end.

JOE BACA, Congressman  
43<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District