**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 16‑15‑342, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO THE OFFENSE OF CRIMINAL SOLICITATION OF A MINOR, SO AS TO INCREASE THE PENALTY FOR THE OFFENSE.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 16‑15‑342 of the 1976 Code, as added by Act 208 of 2004, is amended to read:

“Section 16‑15‑342. (A) A person eighteen years of age or older commits the offense of criminal solicitation of a minor if he knowingly contacts or communicates with, or attempts to contact or communicate with, a person who is under the age of eighteen, or a person reasonably believed to be under the age of eighteen, for the purpose of or with the intent of persuading, inducing, enticing, or coercing the person to engage or participate in a sexual activity as defined in Section 16‑15‑375(5) or a violent crime as defined in Section 16‑1‑60, or with the intent to perform a sexual activity in the presence of the person under the age of eighteen, or person reasonably believed to be under the age of eighteen.

(B) Consent is a defense to a prosecution pursuant to this section if the person under the age of eighteen, or the person reasonably believed to be under the age of eighteen, is at least sixteen years old.

(C) Consent is not a defense to a prosecution pursuant to this section if the person under the age of eighteen, or the person reasonably believed to be under the age of eighteen, is under the age of sixteen.

(D) It is not a defense to a prosecution pursuant to this section, on the basis of consent or otherwise, that the person reasonably believed to be under the age of eighteen is a law enforcement agent or officer acting in an official capacity.

(E) A person who violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than ~~five~~twenty-five thousand dollars or imprisoned for not less than a mandatory minimum of five years nor more than ~~ten~~twenty-five years, or both.”

SECTION 2. The repeal or amendment by this act of any law, whether temporary or permanent or civil or criminal, does not affect pending actions, rights, duties, or liabilities founded thereon, or alter, discharge, release or extinguish any penalty, forfeiture, or liability incurred under the repealed or amended law, unless the repealed or amended provision shall so expressly provide. After the effective date of this act, all laws repealed or amended by this act must be taken and treated as remaining in full force and effect for the purpose of sustaining any pending or vested right, civil action, special proceeding, criminal prosecution, or appeal existing as of the effective date of this act, and for the enforcement of rights, duties, penalties, forfeitures, and liabilities as they stood under the repealed or amended laws.

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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