



Delaware House of Representatives House Majority Caucus

**For Immediate Release:
April 30, 2010**

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HOUSE PASSES BILL ENHANCING LIBRARY INTERNET PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN

Atkins: HB 340 would incorporate wireless Internet technology into 2004 law

DOVER – Lawmakers unanimously passed legislation on Thursday that would protect children who access the internet at Delaware’s public libraries.

House Bill 340 would update a law first enacted in 2004 by employing more technology-neutral language, accommodating the growing use of wireless access and the inevitable introduction of other technologies. The measure would subject the use of personal mobile devices (e.g. web-enabled phones, laptops) within a public library to that library’s acceptable use policy. The bill also would enhance the original established protections for children who use library computers.

Bill sponsor Rep. John C. Atkins said the legislation would serve a dual purpose of promoting wireless technology and increased Internet access while protecting children from obscene or sensitive materials.

“The Internet has opened many doors to our children, giving them unprecedented access to information in a matter of seconds, but there are risks involved in what kind of information should be made available to young children,” said Rep. Atkins, D-Millsboro. “This bill will give libraries the flexibility to offer different solutions to this situation, such as having dedicated children’s computers that are filtered or computers that only have access to age-appropriate software.”

A recent study published by the Institute of Museum and Library Services reports that 45 percent of the 169 million visitors to U.S. public libraries over the past year connected to the Internet using a library computer or wireless network during their visit. Many of these individuals have Internet access at home, but chose to use library networks for a variety of reasons.

HB 340 moves to the Senate for consideration.

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