

Children's
MINNESOTA
The Kid Experts™

February 21, 2024
House Commerce Finance and Policy

Dear Chair Stephenson and Committee Members,

On behalf of Children's Minnesota, I am writing in support of HF2257, the Minnesota Age Appropriate Design Code (AADC), which will protect children in our state by making their online experiences safer.

Children's Minnesota is the state's largest pediatric healthcare system, seeing more than 160,000 kids each year. As pediatricians, my colleagues and I see firsthand the mental health challenges children are facing, challenges that have reached a crisis point not only in Minnesota, but nationwide. Research points to the growing use of digital media as one of many contributing factors to this crisis.

In May of last year, the U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy, released [an advisory](#) highlighting the specific impact of social media on children's mental health. In that advisory Dr. Murthy highlighted how social media has made it easy for youth to be exposed to harmful and inappropriate content as well as content that can negatively impact their self-esteem, leading to depression, body dissatisfaction, eating disorders and more. Social media use can also increase the risk of children being targeted by those that wish to exploit them. This risk is increased when privacy settings aren't clearly understood or set up appropriately.

Today teenagers spend an average of nine hours per day on screens and 81% of 14-22 year olds say they use social media either daily or almost constantly. These are young people interacting in spaces that aren't designed with their welfare in mind, increasing all the risks mentioned above. The Minnesota AADC will change that by putting guardrails in place that protect youth online, giving them the opportunity to enjoy some of the benefits of social media, like community, social support and learning, while protecting them from harm.

Minnesota children and their families need support as they continue to navigate an online world. I hope we can count on your support for HF2257.

Sincerely,



Gigi Chawla, MD, MHA
Vice President and Chief of General Pediatrics
Children's Minnesota