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**Testimony in support of HF2257, Minnesota Age-Appropriate Design Code Act.**

I have been working closely with Minnesota families, educators, and mental health

professionals for twenty years. Our mission has always been to maximize the

benefits and minimize the harms of media’s impact on child and adolescent health and development.

The widespread use of technology by children and adolescents has raised critical

concerns about its impact on their mental health, development, and safety. We are experiencing an epidemic of depression, anxiety, and loneliness.

The reality is that the relationship between technology use and mental health for any individual child is indeed - complicated. Yet tech executives and lobbyists citing “inconclusive evidence” is an insidious dodge of responsibility and distracts from the question in front of us today.

State lawmakers can ensure that websites and apps are safer for kids by design—we have all the evidence we need for that.

Research is clear that manipulative design features are at odds with the developmental needs of children and teens. Current design encourages compulsive behavior, captures private data, and allows unknown users to contact children. The data that companies collect on children drive algorithms that put kids directly in harms' way.

Currently, the entire burden of protection is placed on Minnesota families and children - which is both unfair and further amplifies inequities in risk exposure across our state.

Children are not just “mini adults.” Indeed, childhood and adolescence are often called "windows of opportunity and windows of sensitivity.” We must tell tech companies that they can no longer ignore the specific needs and vulnerabilities of their youngest users.

I believe that the state of MN is currently in a window of opportunity as well.

The MN Kids Code allows us to get upstream from online harms. We can lead the nation in ensuring that their online experiences are positive, safe, and private. We can’t leave this up to the tech companies. It’s their job to make money; it’s lawmakers’ jobs to protect our kids.

This content neutral and design focused bill represents a crucial step forward in protecting Minnesota children from risks while ensuring they have continued access to the many benefits that technology can afford. Our kids’ healthy development and wellbeing depend on it.