

# Minnesota Parents



support the

# Kids Code



ParentsTogether  
ACTION



February 21, 2024

The Honorable Zack Stephenson  
Legislation Commission on Commerce Finance and Policy  
100 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard.  
St Paul, MN 55155

Re: In support of the Age-Appropriate Design Code Act (HF2257)

Dear Chair Stephenson and members of the Legislation Commission on Commerce Finance and Policy,

We, the undersigned, are 211 parents, grandparents, and other Minnesota residents who care about kids, and we're writing because Minnesota needs the Age Appropriate Design Code Act (HF2257 introduced by Rep. Bahner).

Families are in crisis. We're fighting every day to protect our kids from depression, cyberbullying, eating disorders, dangerous viral "challenges," exposure to drug use and to sexual predators – all of which are fueled by social media for big tech profits. These dangers have life-threatening consequences for children. Teens who spend five or more hours a day on social media are [71% more likely to have one or more risk factors for suicide](#) than those who spend less than an hour a day. That's a terrifying number when you consider that 81% of 14 to 22 year-olds said they use social media either "daily" or "almost constantly."

This constant use is by design. Social media companies engineer their products to keep kids online as much as possible – through algorithms, notifications, and endless scrolling – because it makes them money. These manipulative tactics harm users, especially the youngest and most vulnerable. Regulating the tech products our children use is way overdue. We have nutrition labels on food packaging, rigorous testing for cribs and car seats, and yet the technology most children use daily has few to no safeguards.

More than 80% of Americans say they want laws that force social media platforms to take steps to make kids safer online. We agree with President Biden, who in his State of the Union address said that "we must hold social media platforms accountable for the experiment they're conducting on our children for profit." But families can't wait for Congress to act. Minnesota has the opportunity to lead the nation in protecting children online and prioritizing young people's

mental, physical, and emotional health over profits for private companies. The best way to do that is design codes.

Design codes are proven to work to protect children. The UK implemented the Age Appropriate Design Code in September 2021. Since then, tech companies have made changes to products that children use to ensure their data isn't needlessly collected and that product design is not detrimental to their health and well-being.

We believe Minnesota children deserve these protections too, and we need your help getting them for our kids.

We call on Minnesota lawmakers to put children's interests ahead of those of the tech industry by supporting the HF2257, the Minnesota Age Appropriate Design Code Act.

## Minnesota Parent Experiences

*My daughter's ED was triggered by a combination of TikTok weight loss and beauty videos, in spite of screen time filters and parental support, and her 8th grade health class making them count calories. The result was horrific for our whole family. I have had to quit my job. -Sarah A, Taylors Falls, MN*

*I am the mother of four teenage daughters. Daughter developed a severe eating disorder, and I spent a good portion of high school years in treatment centers. Her eating disorder started shortly after she received her first cell phone. She still is in the battle today. -Jody S, Inver Grove Heights, MN*

*The video could have been our daughter. First she got the phone. Then the eating disorder. Then anxiety. Depression. We've spent years in therapy--years--to reassure her that she is beautiful, worthy and good. -Lindsey A, Minneapolis, MN*

*My daughter was hospitalized with anorexia. I still believe social media played the biggest part along with COVID lockdown. -Seth E, Circle Pines, MN*

*My daughter goes through TikTok and all these videos are causing her to feel very insecure about herself, and she tries her best by losing weight. Like wrapping her stomach and running everywhere and not eating a lot. -Mila Q, Moorhead, MN*

*My daughter has struggled with self harm and an eating disorder for the past 4 years, she is now 18 and we are still in the thick of it. -Paula D, Eden Prairie, MN*

*My step daughter is recovering from an eating disorder, substance abuse, and self harm. My now 6yo boy was exposed to very inappropriate videos on what was supposed to be kid safe YouTube at the age of 4. -Aliesha G, Rochester, MN*

*As a middle school teacher and librarian, I see and work with students who have been negatively impacted by online social media. Our school has seen a dramatic increase in the number of students who express feelings of depression and suicidal thoughts. They experience stress and anxiety and feel as though they just can't measure up. -Melissa P, Nisswa, MN*

*My daughter has been through inpatient and outpatient treatment that is related to her depression stemming from social media. -Tanja M, Redwing, MN*

*My wife and I have been dealing with the effects of social media on our daughter for a couple of years now and it's tearing our family apart. -Jamie G, Excelsior, MN*

*Social media has been harmful to not only myself, but also my daughters. I have struggled with body dysmorphia and an eating disorder, while my oldest daughter has now recovered from self harm. I constantly worry about my youngest daughter and if she is going to have the same struggles. I am so careful about what I say around her or to her so that she knows that she is perfect exactly how she is and she is only ten years old. -Christen H, Rosemount, MN*

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Bloomington, MN

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Eden Prairie, MN

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Duluth, MN

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