February 19, 2024

The Honorable Zach Stephenson

House Commerce Finance and Policy Committee

100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, Room 10

State Office Building

Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: HF2257 (Bahner); Minnesota Age-Appropriate Design Code Act

Dear Chair Stephenson and Commerce Committee Members:

I am a Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at the University of Minnesota Medical School and have followed the clinical research that has accumulated convincing evidence of the harms of social media that targets children and adolescents who are in many cases naïve to the strategies of predatory businesses. Therefore, I wish to support HF 2257 as a method of protecting children from the exploitative business practices of some online products. The use of private information needs to be protected so that is in not traded to other organizations to target children with inappropriate and developmentally persuasive commercials messages. Children are often unable to evaluate the consequences of their actions that tracks them deeper into the clutches of marketers. These decisions by children and adolescents need to be vetted by parents to be consistent with the values, ethics and fiscal responsibilities of the family, instead the current business model prioritizes company profits and obfuscates privacy policies and other information..

The Child Psychiatric Oorganization, of which I am a Distinguished Member,. has recently developed a policy that speaks to these social media harms and risks. Please find it at [Impact of Social Media on Youth Mental Health](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Policy_Statements/2023/Social_Media_Youth_Mental_Health.aspx). I will quote two points from the document. …:

* **“” Requiring technology companies to strengthen protections for youth online privacy, create effective controls allowing youth and caregivers to manage screen access and content, and share relevant data for further independent research on social media’s effect on youth mental health.”**
* **“Minimizing children’s and adolescents’ exposure to problematic content including that which promotes self=harm, prejudice, cyberbullying, health misinformation and unrealistic beauty or appearance related content. “**

The document goes much further than this and I encourage Committee Members to further review the policy in its entirety. Additionally, the policy highlights the overwhelming scope of this problem and I am hopeful that the  Minnesota Legislature will consider further action in subsequent legislative sessions. Having said that, I strongly applaud the authors for taking this necessary first step and respectfully request your support of HF 2257.

Sincerely,

George Reamuto M.D.

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