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FINAL REPORT OF THE SENATE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON CHILDREN AND PLATFORM PRIVACY PROTECTION STUDY COMMITTEE (SR 431)

Committee Members

Senator Sally Harrell, Co-Chairman
District 40

Senator Shawn Still, Co-Chairman
District 48

Senator Marty Harbin
District 16

Senator Sheikh Rahman
District 5

Senator Ed Setzler
District 37

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STUDY COMMITTEE CREATION, FOCUS, AND DUTIES

[Senate Resolution 431](#) created the Senate Impact of Social Media and Artificial Intelligence on Children and Platform Privacy Study Committee. Children utilize social media through various online platforms as a means to participate in society, access information, enjoy entertainment, and connect with family and friends. However, studies have shown that utilizing social media can negatively impact a child's health and self-esteem. Children, due to their rapid and evolving physical, mental, and emotional development, are more susceptible to the allure of peer pressure and the rewards inherent in online social media usage. Extensive research shows that online social media platforms are embedded with manipulative design techniques which promote addictive and compulsive use by children in order to increase revenue while exposing children to significant privacy and safety risks. In addition, children are now exposed to chatbot websites and apps, powered by artificial intelligence. These factors render existing online protections obsolete. The Study Committee was tasked with evaluating the impact social media usage and artificial intelligence has on children and determining how existing online privacy protections may be improved and strengthened to ensure safer access.

Senators Sally Harrell of the 40th and Shawn Still of the 48th served as Co-Chairmen of the Study Committee. The other Senate members were Senator Marty Harbin of the 16th, Senator Sheikh Rahman of the 5th, and Senator Ed Setzler of the 37th.

The following legislative staff members were assigned to the Study Committee: Jackson Fuentes, Senate Press Office; Mary Atkins, Senate Office of Policy and Legislative Analysis; Kathlene Dorking, Office of Senator Sally Harrell; Riley Spencer, Office of Senator Shawn Still; Jennifer Boger, Senate Budget and Evaluation Office; and Ben Huntington, Office of Legislative Counsel.

BACKGROUND

The Impact of Social Media on Children

In 2023, the United States Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy published an [Advisory](#) that called the American people's attention to growing concerns about the effects of social media on youth mental health. The Advisory stated that social media use among young people is nearly universal, with up to 95 percent of teenagers, and 40 percent of children aged eight through twelve reporting social media platform use. According to a 2024 Pew Research Center survey of American teenagers, approximately nine out of ten teenagers use social media daily. The Advisory further stated that a [longitudinal cohort study](#) of American adolescents aged twelve through fifteen found that adolescents who spent more than three hours per day on social media faced double the risk of experiencing poor mental health outcomes including symptoms of depression and anxiety. The Advisory was based on a "substantial review of the available evidence" and raises a variety of concerns including time spent on platforms, type of content consumed, and the degree to which online interactions disrupt essential activities. The brain experiences [a highly sensitive period between the ages of ten and nineteen](#) during which identity and feelings of self-worth form. The advisory noted that "frequent social media use may be associated with distinct changes in the developing brain."

Federal Laws Impacting Child Online Safety

[Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996](#) has been credited with creating the internet as it provides limited federal immunity to providers and users of online services. Specifically, the statute immunizes online platforms from civil liability arising from third-party content or the good-faith removal of content that violates terms of use or community standards. The statute was drafted to incentivize online platforms to moderate content to promote user safety without infringing on freedom of expression. Section 230 specifies that service providers and users may not "be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider." The statute is frequently invoked to shield online service providers like social media platforms from liability stemming from decisions to transmit or remove user-generated content.

[The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act \(COPPA\)](#) was enacted in 1998 to limit the ability of marketers to directly or indirectly track and utilize the online activities of children under the age of thirteen without parental consent. COPPA applies to operators of commercial websites or online services directed to children under thirteen and operators of sites and services who have actual knowledge that they are collecting or maintaining personal information from a child. These 'covered operators must post clear privacy policies, obtain verifiable parental consent before collecting or sharing a child's personal information, and give parents the ability to review or delete that data.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is required to enforce and implement COPPA. The FTC's [COPPA Rule](#), among other functions, requires covered operators to provide two notices to parents; prohibits operators from conditioning children's participation in activities on the collection of more personal information than is reasonably necessary; imposes certain security, retention, and deletion requirements on personal information collected; provides methods for obtaining verifiable parental consent; and contains a safe harbor provision that allows industry groups to self-regulate under a FTC approved plan.

Examples of State Level Policy Solutions

Due to rising concerns regarding the effects of social media use on children, many state lawmakers are introducing legislation to protect child users. Previously introduced legislation includes bills and resolutions that create task forces and study committees, establish age-appropriate design codes, require age-verification or parental consent prior to account creation, require digital and media literacy education, and regulate personal device use in schools. According to the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#), as of October 24th, over 300 pieces of legislation addressing children and social media has been introduced in over 45 states and Puerto Rico in 2025.

I. Addictive Feed Legislation

Protecting Our Kids from Social Media Act

State: California (SB 976)

Status: The Act was signed by Governor Newsome on September 20, 2024.

Effective Date: January 1, 2027

Summary: The Act prohibits the operator of an addictive internet-based service or application from providing an addictive feed to a user unless the operator: does not have actual knowledge that the user is a minor, has reasonably determined that the user is not a minor, or has obtained verifiable parental consent. The Act defines ‘addictive feed’ as a website, service, or application, in which multiple user generated or shared posts are recommended, selected, or prioritized for display to a user based on information provided by or associated with a user or their device, unless certain conditions are met.

The Act also prohibits the operator of an addictive internet-based service or application from sending notifications to users meeting the above requirements between 12:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. everyday and between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. during weekdays from September through May. The Act requires operators to provide certain annual disclosures regarding minor users. The Act authorizes the Attorney General to enforce these provisions through civil actions.

Stop Addictive Feeds Exploitation (SAFE) for Kids Act

State: New York (S. 7694A/A.8148A)

Status: The Act was signed by Governor Hochul on June 20, 2024.

Effective Date: The Act takes effect 180 days after the New York Attorney General promulgates the required rules and regulations.

Summary: The Act prohibits operators of social media platforms that meet certain requirements from providing addictive feeds to New York users without obtaining verified parental consent if a user is a minor or using commercially reasonable and technically feasible methods to determine that a user is not a minor. The Act also prohibits these operators from: sending notifications to minor users between 12:00 a.m. and 6 a.m. without specific parental consent and withholding, degrading, lowering the quality, or increasing the price of any product, service, or feature due to not being able to obtain the required consent.

The Act defines “addictive feeds” as online websites, services, apps, or their components that feature multiple user generated or shared posts and sequentially or concurrently recommend, select, or prioritize displaying posts to users based on information associated with said user or their devices. The Act requires the Attorney General to promulgate implementing regulations. These regulations must: identify commercially reasonable and technically feasible age verification methods, including the appropriate level of acceptable accuracy; and define methods of obtaining verifiable parental consent. At least one approved age verification method must either allow a user to maintain anonymity with the operator or not exclusively rely on government issued identification.

The Act grants the Attorney General enforcement authority, including imposing civil penalties up to \$5,000 per violation, and directs them to maintain a website to receive public compliance complaints, information, and referrals.

II. Broader Social Media Design Legislation

Age-Appropriate Online Design Code Act

State: Nebraska (LB 504)

Status: The Act was signed by Governor Pillen on May 30, 2025.

Effective Date: The Act takes effect on January 1, 2026 and enforcement actions may be brought beginning on July 1, 2026.

Summary: The Act requires covered services to implement default high-protection settings, minimize data collection and retention, prohibit profiling and targeted advertising for covered minors, and restrict the use of dark patterns and advertisements for prohibited products. The Act defines ‘covered online services’ as entities that: conduct business in Nebraska; determine the purposes and means of processing users’ personal information; and have annual gross revenue over \$25 million, adjusted every other year for inflation, at least 50 percent of which is derived from the sale or sharing of personal user data.

The Act prohibits push alerts and notifications from covered services between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. and between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on weekdays during the school year. The Act requires accessible parental control tools be enabled by default for users known to be under thirteen, and requires obvious signals when parental monitoring or geolocation tracking is active. Covered online services must establish harm reporting mechanisms and designate compliance officers.

Violations constitute deceptive trade practices for which civil penalties of up to \$50,000 per violation may be sought by the Attorney General beginning on July 1, 2026.

Vermont Age-Appropriate Design Code Act

State: Vermont (S. 69/ Act 63)

Status: The Act was signed by Governor Scott on June 12, 2025.

Effective Date: The Act takes effect on January 1, 2027, but the Attorney General’s rulemaking authority takes effect on July 1, 2025.

Summary: This Act requires covered businesses to protect minor users from certain harms when processing their data and when its digital products are being used by minors. The Act requires covered businesses to, by default, impose the highest possible privacy settings for minor users. The Act defines ‘covered business’ as any entity that: conducts business in Vermont; generates a majority of its annual revenue from online services that are reasonably likely to be accessed by a minor; collects the personal data of consumers; and determines the purposes and means of the processing of consumers’ personal data.

The Act prohibits the collection or sharing of the personal data of a minor unless otherwise necessary to provide a certain service to the minor. In addition, the Act restricts the ability of a covered business to permit an individual to monitor the activity or location of a minor on its digital product without providing a conspicuous signal to the minor. The Act mandates that covered businesses adhere to a minimum duty of care towards minors. This requires covered businesses to avoid causing emotional distress, compulsive use, or discrimination against minors through data processing or service design. The Attorney General is granted rulemaking authority to further define what design practices might lead to compulsive use of a digital product and to provide covered businesses with privacy-minded methods to estimate user age. Violations constitute unfair and deceptive acts in commerce.

III. Legislation Restricting Account Creation

Walker Montgomery Protecting Children Online Act

State: Mississippi (H.B. 1126)

Status: The Act was signed by Governor Reeves on April 30, 2024.

Effective Date: The Act took effect on July 1, 2024

Summary: The Act applies to digital service providers that: connects users in a manner that allows them to socially interact, allows a user to create a profile for purposes of signing into and using the digital service, and allows a user to create or post content shared with other users. The Act requires digital service providers to: require prospective account holders to register their age, use commercially reasonable means to verify age, prohibit minors under age 18 from obtaining an account without express parental consent, and collect and use minors' personal information only to the extent reasonably necessary to provide the digital service.

The Act prohibits digital service providers from: collecting minors' precise geolocation data; using minors' personal information for targeted advertising involving harmful material; and sharing, disclosing, or selling the minor's personal information unless they are complying with a governmental or law enforcement investigation, preventing the distribution of harmful material to the minor, blocking spam, preventing criminal activity, or protecting digital service security. The Act authorizes a minor's parent or guardian to seek a declaratory judgment or injunction for violations. In addition, the Act grants the Attorney General enforcement authority under state consumer protection law.

IV. Legislation Addressing App Stores

App Store Accountability Act

State: Utah (SB 142)

Status: The Act was signed by the Governor on March 26, 2025.

Effective Date: The Act took effect on May 7, 2025, but app store providers and developers have until May 6, 2025 to comply.

Summary: The Act requires app store providers to verify users' ages and block minors from downloading apps or making in-app purchases without parental consent. The Act requires app store providers to request age information and verify a user's age category upon account creation. If the age verification method determines that the user is a minor, the app store provider must require the account be affiliated with a parent account. App store providers must only transmit personal age verification data to developers for listed purposes. In doing so, providers must use industry-standard encryption protocols and limit the collection and sharing of such data.

The Act requires app store providers to obtain verifiable parental consent prior to allowing a minor user to download or purchase apps or to make in-app purchases. Before giving consent, parents must be provided a parental consent disclosure that displays the app's age rating and content description given by the developer; the personal data the app collects and shares; and how the developer protects user data. App store providers must notify the affiliated parent account and obtain renewed parental consent if there is a significant change to the app. A "significant change" includes changes in how the data is collected, stored, or shared and changes to an app's age rating or content description.

The Act requires developers to age-rate their apps. Developers must also, through the app store's data sharing methods, verify the age category of Utah users and confirm verifiable parental consent if the user is a minor. Developers must request age verification or parental consent for a minor user when a user downloads or purchases an app, when the developer implements a significant change to the app, or to comply with applicable laws or regulations. An app store provider or developer knowingly misrepresenting the information in the parental consent disclosure constitutes a deceptive trade practice under state law enforceable by the Utah Attorney General. A minor, or their parent, would have a private right of action against a developer or app store provider if their child is harmed from certain violations.

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY AND DISCUSSION

MEETING ONE

Date: August 27, 2025

Location: Georgia State Capitol, Room 450– Atlanta, GA

Topic: Introductory Meeting

Attendees and Speakers

Members: S. Harrell (Co-Chair); S. Still (Co-Chair); M. Harbin; S. Rahman

Speakers: Sharon Winkler (Parents for Safe Online Spaces); Laura Ladefian (Laura Ladefian Counseling, LLC); Rachel Franz (Fairplay); Dr. Robert Wiskind (Georgia Academy of Pediatrics); Casey Mock (Anxious Generation); Mary Atkins (Office of Policy and Legislative Analysis)

Summary of Testimony

1. Sharon Winkler (Parents for Safe Online Spaces)

Ms. Winkler, an Advocate with Parents for Safe Online Spaces, discussed the social media and online harms affecting Georgia's children. She stated that in 2015, in response to observed changes in children and adolescents, the National Institutes of Health, began the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study. The ABCD Study is an ongoing longitudinal research study and is the largest long-term study of brain development and child health in the United States. She stated that the ABCD Study found that cyberbullying was the number one cause of suicidal ideations in ten to thirteen year old children. Ms. Winkler stated that in response to research such as the ABCD study, the Online Harms Prevention Working Group, of which she is a member, was asked to develop a list of online harms experienced by children. She provided the Committee with the following working list of online societal harms that her working group is seeking to address:

- Cyberbullying;
- Online gambling;
- Illegal drug sales;
- Mental health;
- Harmful online challenges;
- Screen overuse;
- Gaming overuse;
- Dark patterns;
- Lifestyle changes-less sleep and time with friends; and
- Online sexual enticement/child sexual abuse material.

Ms. Winkler discussed the role of algorithms in promoting harmful content and indicated that her son, who passed away due to suicide, was shown posts of corpses covered in sheets with ropes without directly seeking pro-suicide content. Ms. Winkler discussed the proposed federal Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA) which is designed to safeguard minors from online harms like cyberbullying, dangerous viral challenges, and sextortion. Ms. Winkler stated that big tech's business model prioritizes maximizing user engagement for profit over the health and safety of children and adolescents. She stated that online platforms deploy sophisticated design features that keep children and adolescents hooked and therefore subject to targeted advertisements. Ms. Winkler stated that big tech has failed to put necessary guardrails in place, especially in relation to targeted advertising and algorithms.

Co-Chairman Still asked what states are leading the way legislatively in addressing these issues. Ms. Winkler stated that Texas, Utah, and Mississippi are all doing a lot of good work. She also discussed recent

Supreme Court cases that permit age verification requirements in certain contexts. Ms. Winkler also highlighted the United Kingdom's method of age verification by credit card.

2. Laura Ladefian (Voices for Georgia's Children)

Ms. Ladefian, a Licensed Professional Counselor specializing in play therapy and parent-child relationships, explained the impact of social media on children and adolescents from a mental health practitioner's perspective. She stated that the behavior of young children is driven by gaining rewards and avoiding punishment. However, as children age, their behavior is shaped, to a much greater degree, by peer pressure and a desire for acceptance. This leads to parents feeling as though they have more control of young children at home, however children as young as eight are motivated by peer pressure and children as young as twelve crave stimulation. She stated that social media platforms provide this stimulation, but that a child's brain quickly becomes overwhelmed by this barrage of information.

Ms. Ladefian stated that an individual's ability to practice good decision making changes with time and development. The prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain responsible for offering the capacity to exercise good judgement when presented with difficult life situations, is not fully developed until age 25. During adolescence (ages ten to 24), significant changes occur in the limbic system which constitutes the brain's reward pathway. These reward pathways light up in a child's brain without the counterweight of the child's prefrontal cortex, this lack of counterweight makes children and adolescents more vulnerable to addiction. She stated that positive stimuli release dopamine which reinforce the behavior that preceded such release. Ms. Ladefian emphasized that smartphones provide an unlimited supply of social stimuli and that every like, comment, notification, and share has the potential to create a dopamine influx. This release leaves users caught in a loop of self-reinforcement and susceptible to habitual and addictive use. She stated that children cannot effectively weigh potential risks and consequences and therefore cannot self-govern when it comes to these platforms.

Next, Ms. Ladefian stated that several studies relevant to her practice population found that children with frequent internet use are more likely to experience child sexual abuse and that adolescents with heavy social media use are more likely to experience depression. She stated that one in five youth experience unwanted online exposure to sexually explicit material and one in four minors experience online sexual grooming via long intimate conversations in online chatrooms.

In addition, adolescents using digital media for over five hours per day are 48 to 171 percent more likely to be unhappy, be low in well-being, and experience suicide risk factors such as depression, suicidal ideation, or past suicide attempts compared to those using social media for less than one hour per day. Ms. Ladefian stated that her patients' caregivers often feel disempowered as they feel unable to control or withhold technology, given the normalization of child access to devices, social media, and gaming sites. She emphasized that tasking children with responsibility that they are not developmentally ready for puts them at risk for poor outcomes. Ms. Ladefian provided the Committee with the following key takeaways:

- Parents need to be empowered through information and solidarity with other parents, to take meaningful action to delay or limit social media use;
- Children need access to more spaces and communities where tech-free is the norm, paired with positive experiences and social connections;
- Children also need education about technology, brain science, and risks;
- Schools need policies, practices, and resources to limit student use of devices, or access to dangerous content on campus; and
- Social media, gaming, and other related sites need age and parental verifications and meaningful notices and disclosures of risks.

Co-Chairman Still asked what legislative trends are headed in the right direction, particularly at the school level. Ms. Ladefian stated that some of her patients are students of private schools that have instituted a ban on cell phones for all grades. She stated that her patients who attend these schools report increased

social interaction. Senator Harbin asked about pornography exposure. Ms. Ladefian stated that the internet has created wide and open access and that children lack the cognitive ability to think critically about the content that they are consuming. She stated that inadvertent exposure to sexually explicit material often happens prior to parental discussions about sex and pornography. Co-Chairman Harrell emphasized the importance of considering child development stages in crafting policy.

3. Rachel Franz (Fairplay)

Ms. Franz, the Director of Fairplay's Young Children Thrive Offline Program, discussed technology's impact on children's growth, learning, and well-being. She stated that Fairplay is a national nonprofit working to eliminate the exploitive and harmful business practices of marketers and big tech on behalf of families. She noted that according to a 2024 Surgeon General's Advisory, approximately 70 percent of parents say that parenting is more difficult now than it was twenty years ago, with children's use of technology and social media as the two most cited reasons. Fairplay recently surveyed families of children under six and found that families are deeply concerned about the impact of digital devices on their children's development. The most concerning impacts reported by parents were: behavioral changes, reduced attention spans, inappropriate content exposure, loss of interest in non-screen activities, and social skill development deficits.

Ms. Franz stated that parents are being asked to do the impossible: compete with attention monopolizing, manipulative technology designed to prey upon children's developmental vulnerabilities. She emphasized that online safety is not a matter of better parenting and that the interference of technology in a child's healthy development is beyond a parent's individual control. She explained the four key elements that children need to thrive, as outlined in Jonathan Haidt's *The Anxious Generation*: attunement and attachment, free play, social learning, and cultural learning. Ms. Franz highlighted that tech companies are making deliberate, unregulated design and marketing decisions that undermine each of the listed elements.

She stated that the mechanisms and designs employed by social media platforms are the same or similar as those employed by apps, videos, and games intended for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. Ms. Franz explained that early childhood is the foundation of human development, as the brain grows more in the first five years than at any other time in life. Ms. Franz discussed the significant and growing impact of manipulative tech design on young children, particularly during their critical early development. She emphasized that skills like language acquisition, emotional self-regulation, and physical coordination are foundational to long-term success in life.

Ms. Franz discussed the impact of adverse childhood experiences on development and stated that exposure to digital platforms, even to those marketed as educational tools, may constitute adverse experiences. She stated that certain platforms frequently use manipulative design tactics, such as autoplay, infinite scroll, scarcity messaging, gambling-like features, frequent rewards, and virtual currencies, to keep children engaged, collect data, and drive profit. Ms. Franz stated that these tactics are not only deceptive but particularly harmful to young children, who lack impulse control and are developmentally sensitive to rewards and emotional manipulation.

Ms. Franz highlighted the fact that babies and toddlers are targeted by manipulative design. She stated that 40 percent of children possess a tablet by age two. She further stated that many babies and toddlers are exposed to YouTube and YouTube Kids and that these platforms provide low-quality content that is falsely promoted as educational. Ms. Franz emphasized that many parents falsely believe screen time is essential for learning. She explained that only a small fraction of content labeled as educational meets true educational standards. She stated that instead of educating children, this inaccurately labeled content frequently displaces important parent-child interaction and free, imaginative play. Ms. Franz stated that, in this context, technology interferes with essential developmental processes, such as emotional bonding

and cultural learning. She emphasized that technology is designed against attunement and therefore its use by parents and children disrupts critical moments of connection and communication.

Ms. Franz stated that platforms like Roblox employ manipulative design through scarcity tactics, time-based rewards, gambling mechanics, and commercial pressures intended to influence the behavior of child consumers. She highlighted the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation which suggests no screen time for children under two and less than an hour a day for children aged two to five. She explained that the majority of families exceed this recommended limit, as caregivers often feel overwhelmed and unable to resist the pull of omnipresent digital content. Ms. Franz stated that parents report challenges such as tantrums, difficulty setting limits, and uncertainty about what is healthy, and explained that these challenges are difficult to overcome because content is intentionally designed to be addictive and hard to control.

Ms. Franz stated that children are increasingly immersed in commercialized, algorithm-driven environments that displace authentic human interaction and developmental needs. Families are asking for help, and survey data shows broad, bipartisan support for stronger regulations to protect young children online. She offered several recommendations, including: banning advertisements and autoplay features, requiring clear educational standards and content labeling, restricting the use of influencers and cartoon characters to manipulate children, and requiring warning labels be placed on devices aimed at children. She concluded by stating that parents cannot parent past a system designed against them, and that collective action is urgently needed to protect the future of childhood from profit-driven tech design.

4. Dr. Robert Wiskind (The American Academy of Pediatrics)

Dr. Wiskind, a representative of the American Academy of Pediatrics, discussed the various resources his organization offers regarding children's digital media use. He stated that children's unique development makes them more vulnerable to the negative impacts of digital marketing. He acknowledged that parental supervision is crucial, but emphasized that tech developers and policymakers are in the best position to create safer digital environments.

Dr. Wiskind provided the committee with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics. He emphasized the need for stricter privacy regulations, advocating that all apps and platforms should default to the highest level of privacy, with clear, upfront data collection and use disclosures. He stated that for children under thirteen, personal and location data collection should be prohibited without parental consent, and for adolescents aged thirteen to seventeen, the adolescents themselves should have to consent to collection. He called for a complete ban on targeted advertising to anyone under eighteen, and a ban on all commercial advertising to children under seven, because younger children often cannot cognitively distinguish content from advertisements. Additionally, he recommended prohibiting in-app purchases and hidden monetization tactics, and ensuring that there is a clear separation between advertising and content in media aimed at children. He also urged policymakers to fund and mandate digital literacy education in schools, so that students are better equipped to critically analyze media and resist manipulative advertising.

5. Casey Mock (Anxious Generation)

Casey Mock, a Senior Policy Manager at Anxious Generation, provided a comprehensive overview of how the ubiquity of smartphones and social media over the past fifteen years has profoundly reshaped childhood and contributed to widespread, deeply rooted harms. He stated that his primary goal is to place the Committee's understanding of youth tech harms within a broader historical and societal context, by explaining that social media/smartphone use is not a temporary trend or individual failing, but a systemic shift which demands policy intervention at the state level. He emphasized the unprecedented speed at which both smartphones and social media were adopted by families, noting that today's adolescents have never known a world without constant internet-connected screens. This, he asserted, is why many harms, such as mental health challenges and academic decline, are only beginning to surface. Unlike earlier eras,

today's teens are immersed in an always-on environment, with everything from smartphones to gaming consoles and even school-issued tablets contributing to near-constant screen exposure.

Mr. Mock proceeded to explain the four “foundational harms” that have emerged from this new digital environment:

- Social deprivation;
- Sleep deprivation;
- Attention fragmentation; and
- Addiction.

He stated that each of these harms displaces critical developmental experiences essential to children, like face-to-face interaction, rest, and focused attention. He explained that teenagers now spend far less in-person time with friends and lose sleep due to late-night social media engagement. Mr. Mock emphasized that many teenagers are perpetually distracted by their phones due to habit and notification conditioning.

He explained the behavioral science underpinning addictive technologies, explaining that companies intentionally design platforms around what is known as the “hooked model,” which exploits dopamine-driven feedback loops to encourage compulsive use. Mr. Mock stated that internal documents from big tech companies demonstrate that platforms rely on keeping users, especially teenagers, engaged through variable rewards, addictive features, and a deep investment in digital identity. Mr. Mock emphasized that teenagers are not unaware of this manipulation, as many report feeling controlled by platforms. He discussed the “collective trap” driven by FOMO (fear of missing out), where teenagers feel social pressure to stay connected even when they wish social media platforms did not exist. He stated that data suggests that many adolescent users would pay to make these platforms disappear entirely which shows that many are participating against their own long-term interests.

Mr. Mock discussed the harms of unwanted sexual content, contact from strangers, and overexposure to harmful material. He explained that many cases of manipulation and fraud begin with unwanted contact from strangers which is facilitated by loose privacy defaults and high rate limits. Mr. Mock also noted that many consumers report having experiences with unwanted disturbing, graphic, and sexual content recommended by AI powered algorithms. He stressed that many harms associated with unwanted contact, such as exposure to pornography, happen inadvertently and could be significantly reduced through smarter platform design, like stricter privacy defaults and limits on how many users someone can message in a short time.

Mr. Mock concluded his presentation by urging the Committee to take action at the state level, emphasizing that states have both the authority and responsibility, rooted in long-standing consumer protection law, to regulate exploitive business models. He emphasized the necessity of collective action. He stated that placing guardrails around child technology use should not be viewed as a technology ban, but as a way to “give something back” to parents and children. Mr. Mock stated that proper guardrails will restore the time, safety, and developmental space that was taken by a system designed for profit, not well-being.

6. Mary Atkins (Office of Policy and Legislative Analysis)

Ms. Mary Atkins, Senior Legal and Policy Analyst with the Office of Policy and Legislative Analysis, outlined federal law regulating social media platforms. She emphasized that the United States lacks comprehensive federal laws regulating social-media platforms and data privacy. Instead, federal oversight is limited to narrow areas such as child sexual abuse material, certain types of obscenity, and sector-specific data regulations. Ms. Atkins emphasized that social media regulation intersects significantly with constitutional protections, particularly First Amendment rights related both to individual speech and to the editorial discretion of platforms.

She explained the structure and purpose of Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which immunizes platforms from lawsuits arising from content posted by third-party users and from suits arising from good-faith moderation of content. Enacted in 1996, Section 230 helped facilitate the growth of user-generated content by preventing platforms from being treated as traditional publishers. Ms. Atkins also described exceptions to these immunities, including violations of criminal, copyright, and sex-trafficking statutes, as well as situations in which platforms themselves generate the content at issue.

Ms. Atkins explained the provisions of the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), stating that the Act imposes certain requirements on operators of websites or online services directed to children under thirteen years of age in relation to data collection. She explained that the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) expanded “personal information” in 2013 to include persistent identifiers which particularly important given modern tracking technologies. She also summarized the COPPA Safe Harbor program, which allows approved entities to administer compliance frameworks subject to FTC oversight.

Ms. Atkins noted the recent Supreme Court decision upholding a Texas age-verification law, which may influence ongoing constitutional challenges to similar statutes nationwide. She observed that many states are pursuing legislation aimed at minors’ online safety, including age-verification mandates, age-appropriate design codes, media-literacy programs, and school-based device regulations.

Ms. Atkins concluded by summarizing current litigation regarding Georgia’s Senate Bill 351, which required platforms to verify users’ ages, obtain parental consent for minors’ accounts, and restrict advertisements targeted to children. She stated that the federal district court issued a preliminary injunction, finding the law imposed unconstitutional burdens on both minors’ speech and adults’ access to online services. While the Attorney General’s office has stated its intent to appeal, Ms. Atkins noted that her office had not confirmed the filing. She emphasized that crafting effective, constitutionally sound regulations in this area remains challenging for states nationwide.

MEETING TWO

Date: September 17, 2025

Location: Georgia State Capitol, Room 450– Atlanta, GA

Attendees and Speakers

Members: S. Harrell (Co-Chair); S. Still (Co-Chair); M. Harbin; S. Rahman; E. Setzler

Speakers: Casey Stefanski (Digital Childhood Alliance); Pete Furlong (Center for Humane Technology); Dr. Ravi Iyer (Anxious Generation)

Summary of Testimony

1. Casey Stefanski (Digital Childhood Alliance)

Casey Stefanski, the Executive Director of the Digital Childhood Alliance, explained her intention to introduce the Committee to a solution that can empower Georgia's parents to make informed decisions about their children's access to digital content. This solution is a model piece of legislation entitled the App Store Accountability Act. She indicated that even well-intentioned and vigilant parents are incapable of adequately protecting their children from online harms due to structural flaws in digital platform design and regulation. Ms. Stefanski emphasized that the app store serves as the front door to the digital world, with the vast majority of children's screen time spent on downloaded apps, often without any parental awareness or involvement.

She noted that unlike nearly every other industry that markets products to children and teens, app stores are practically exempt from child safety regulations which creates dangerous loopholes in protections for minors. In order to address these critical gaps, the App Store Accountability Act:

- Protects minors by requiring parental permission before they can agree to apps' terms of service contracts;
- Requires accurate app age ratings to ensure parents can give informed consent;
- Requires app stores to verify age using available data and technology; and
- Focuses on contract law, not content moderation or free speech.

The Act requires verified parental consent prior to the download of any app by a child. In addition, parents must receive a notification and have the ability to approve or deny downloads in real time. This provision leverages the existing infrastructure already imposed by Apple and Google on the accounts of users under thirteen. Ms. Stefanski explained that the Act ends the current self-rating system employed by app developers. She stated that the current self-rating system often leads to misleading classifications and noted that according to a Wall Street Journal Article, one in four apps rated as safe for children included violent, sexual, or otherwise harmful content. She explained that the Act requires transparent and truthful age and content disclosures and that accurate ratings empower parents to make informed decisions about the content that their children consume.

The Act prohibits children from entering into binding legal agreements such as terms of service that authorize data collection, location tracking, and financial commitments without parental consent. This provision aligns with the long-standing contract law principle that minors may not enter into binding agreements without parental consent. Ms. Stefanski noted that due to the current lack of meaningful regulations, children frequently and unknowingly consent to contracts simply by downloading an app.

Ms. Stefanski underscored that these changes are not only necessary, but feasible as Apple and Google already offer limited, optional versions of the Act's required features. She highlighted the necessity of stronger, unilateral regulation by explaining the insufficiency of industry imposed regulations. She clarified that the Act addresses app distribution practices, not content regulation, by ensuring that platforms comply with legal obligations, like verifying parental consent, without restricting free speech. She highlighted that a version of the Act has received broad bipartisan support and the backing of over 140 child advocacy

organizations and legal experts. Utah, Texas, and Louisiana enacted a version of the Act. Ms. Stefanski acknowledged sizable opposition from large tech corporations, but stated that such resistance is due to financial interests, instead of genuine compliance concerns.

The Committee raised concerns about broader online risks, such as children being contacted via platforms like Discord or manipulated by political actors. Ms. Stefanski clarified that while the Act does not directly address all digital risks, it complements existing and potential laws by establishing an age verification and consent infrastructure that can be used to enforce broader protections. The Committee also discussed app store profit structures and the inadequacy of current parental controls. Ms. Stefanski stated that the Act requires parental approval for all in-app purchases, but does not directly address subscriptions. She reiterated that this Act is a commonsense, enforceable, privacy-preserving tool that gives parents the ability to parent effectively in a digital world. While not a panacea, she emphasized that the App Store Accountability Act is a critical and urgently needed step in protecting children from online harms and restoring family control over digital engagement.

2. Pete Furlong (Center for Humane Technology)

Pete Furlong, Lead Policy Researcher at the Center for Humane Technology, discussed the critical role that algorithmic design and business incentives play in shaping user experiences on digital platforms, particularly social media. Mr. Furlong explained the basic mechanics of algorithms, highlighting the distinction between traditional rules-based systems and modern machine learning algorithms which underpin today's addictive content feeds.

He stated that traditional rules-based algorithms work by implementing a series of hard-coded rules for processing input data and making decisions or generating outputs. However, AI, neural networks, or machine learning algorithms work by learning patterns in training data and extrapolating from those patterns in new situations. These algorithms process a variety of data inputs, from content characteristics to user behavior and demographics, to predict what content will maximize user engagement. He explained that algorithms of varying degrees of complexity are used across software systems and applications to complete a variety of tasks including to:

- Accomplish age estimation and other marketing segmentation approaches;
- Set timing intervals for user push notifications;
- Assess a user's creditworthiness or other characteristics via automated decision systems;
- Set gambling odds on a sports betting site; and
- Establish algorithmic feeds for social media platforms.

He stated that platforms have largely shifted from chronological content delivery to engagement-based rankings, using inferred user data like watch time or scrolling speed to personalize feeds in ways that increase user retention and time spent on the platform. Mr. Furlong stated that most feed algorithms work to answer the question: "How likely is it that a user will engage with this content?" There are different ways to measure engagement, differences in engagement measurement leads to unique optimization decisions. However, most large platforms rank their feeds primarily by predicted engagement which often serves as a proxy goal for business objectives.

Mr. Furlong emphasized that the core issue is that algorithms are optimized not for user well-being or content quality, but for predicted engagement, which directly aligns with the platforms' monetization strategies. Engagement includes clicks, views, likes, comments, and other forms of interaction, all of which generate advertising revenue. He stated that this engagement forward business model prioritizes addictive user behavior over ethical design or long-term value. Mr. Furlong stressed that companies could optimize for alternative metrics, such as user satisfaction or educational value, but choose not to because these alternative metrics are harder to measure and may conflict with short-term profitability.

He discussed the implications for minors and their parents, highlighting that platform design can lead minors into dangerous content spirals. These spirals occur when an accidental or curious view of inappropriate material results in more of the same being shown. Parents lack knowledge regarding how these algorithms function and control over how their children's data is used, and companies currently have little obligation to provide this knowledge or control. Mr. Furlong stated that some platforms offer limited parental oversight tools, but that these tools are inconsistent and easily altered at the companies' discretion rendering platform self-governance inadequate.

Mr. Furlong reiterated that the current business model is directly tied to user engagement levels, the more time and interaction a user provides, the more revenue is generated. He stated that this makes safeguards like time limits for minors financially unattractive to platforms. He emphasized that alternative platforms like Blue Sky attempt to provide user control over algorithms but face steep challenges due to network effects and large platform market dominance.

Mr. Furlong discussed the imbalance of power and transparency between users and platforms, stressing that platforms are constantly collecting data on users, while users remain in the dark about how their data is used. He stated that policy solutions that target algorithmic design rather than restrict content could render systems less addictive and more accountable, but noted that effective design-based interventions require an understanding of what types of algorithms are used, the information that they process, and how they tie to business incentives.

3. Dr. Ravi Iyer (Anxious Generation)

Dr. Ravi Iyer, a Policy Advisor at Anxious Generation, discussed the alarming prevalence of harmful experiences of minors on social media and how to measurably improve child online safety. He stated that in just one week, nineteen percent of minors reported encountering unwanted sexual content, while eleven percent faced bullying or harassment online. Dr. Iyer underscored that harm is often more deeply rooted in user interactions and platform design than content itself. Consequently, several platforms have shifted their harm reduction strategy from traditional content moderation to design modification by removing algorithmic incentives for sensational content and introducing tools to prioritize quality and user control. The design modification approach removes human judgement and subjectivity from the equation, increases legal and political legitimacy and defensibility, and is more effective in removing "borderline" content than the traditional content moderation approach.

Dr. Iyer explained that many social media design features directly enable harmful behaviors, for example, platforms that allow users to send unlimited friend requests create opportunities for predatory behavior. Design fixes like rate limiting, privacy adjustments, and minimizing public visibility of friend networks may limit potential harms without interfering with the user experience. Dr. Iyer categorized major digital harms into three groups: excessive screen time, unwanted or harmful content, and unwanted contact. He stated that while many of these harms stem from a minority of malicious users, platform architecture facilitates bad actors and broadens their reach. Dr. Iyer criticized business models that prioritize engagement and growth over safety, asserting that even as platforms offer user controls, these controls are often difficult to use or rely too heavily on individual parental oversight. He stated that requiring platforms to implement safer default settings is the superior approach because it makes parental oversight more feasible.

Dr. Iyer differentiated between expressive decisions (like editorial judgments) and non-expressive design choices (like engagement-optimizing algorithms), noting that recent court decisions opened the door for regulation of the latter. He stated his support for policies that target specific design elements and addictive design features and deceptive user interface patterns which are also known as dark patterns. He explained that the growing trend among states seeking to establish protections for minor users is regulation of design features rather than content access and postulated that this trend is due to First Amendment concerns.

Dr. Iyer discussed systemic industry problems like forced account creation, invasive data practices, and consent fatigue. He stated that view-only modes which allow the passive use of platforms without an account help to limit data collection from minors and minor exposure to algorithmic targeting. He noted that shifting age verification responsibilities from individual apps to broader gatekeepers like app stores or device manufacturers could help to ensure consistency and consolidate the burden of parental consent. He cautioned that constant parental consent requests lead to consent fatigue which causes parents to approve apps without scrutiny. He suggested allowing parents to set broad default restrictions to reduce this fatigue. Dr. Iyer called for broader accountability measures, including a form of excise tax on platforms linked to youth mental health harm, better public health metrics on digital harm, and transparency around inferred data used for targeting. He asserted that regulation does not automatically hinder innovation and explained that the current tech ecosystem rewards harmful behavior under the guise of progress. He stressed that protecting young users is a public health imperative that requires design-centered solutions.

Dr. Iyer highlighted how platforms often condition benefits or require users to enable tracking or other intrusive features to access core app functionalities. He stated that this as a form of dark pattern manipulation and suggested that regulation of benefit conditioning design features is necessary. Dr. Iyer compared child online safety to the automotive industry before safety regulations, noting that manufacturers did not view safety as a competitive market factor until government standards forced an industrywide baseline. He stated that regulation will establish a floor to allow platforms to choose safer models while remaining viable. Dr. Iyer explained that doing so might incentivize a platform to strive to become the “Volvo” of tech instead of maximizing profit at the expense of public health.

Dr. Iyer expressed concerns about children unknowingly consenting to invasive data practices, such as granting access to phone contacts or contributing to AI training datasets. He analogized digital contracts to credit card agreements and asserted that if minors are prohibited from entering into financial contracts, they should also be prohibited from entering into digital contracts. Dr. Iyer discussed the importance of data portability and interoperability, key provisions of Utah’s Digital Choice Act, which allow users to move their data and social connections between platforms. This interoperability gives consumers more power to leave unsafe environments, promotes competition, and forces platforms to improve safety. He stated that current platform incentives heavily rely on a small group of high-engagement users and that this small concentration of profit drives companies to keep users online as long as possible. Dr. Iyer acknowledged that most platforms offer privacy tools including privacy disclosures, but noted that platforms rarely disclose inferred behavioral data, which is highly valuable for advertisers and often used to target users based on predicted behavior rather than provided personal information.

Dr. Iyer cautioned against the argument that regulation stifles innovation, asserting that not all technological progress is inherently beneficial. He urged the Committee to recognize that safeguarding children and promoting healthier digital spaces is not anti-innovation, but responsible governance.

MEETING THREE

Date: October 8, 2025

Location: Georgia State Capitol, Room 450 – Atlanta, GA

Topic: Emerging AI Harms on Digital Platforms

Attendees and Speakers

Members: S. Harrell (Co-Chair); S. Still (Co-Chair); M. Harbin; S. Rahman; E. Setzler

Speakers: M. Garcia (parent advocate); S. Winkler (parent advocate); R. Eleveld (AI Transparency Coalition); M. Jain (Tech Justice Law Project); and M. Dincer (Tech Justice Law Project)

Summary of Testimony

1. Megan Garcia (Parent Advocate)

Ms. Megan Garcia, a parent advocate, discussed the importance of regulating AI chatbots. Ms. Garcia explained that her fourteen-year-old son, Sewell Setzer, committed suicide in 2024 after becoming romantically infatuated with a chatbot purporting to be a popular fictional character. She stated that in the months preceding his death, her son became withdrawn, anxious, and depressed. Following his death, Ms. Garcia discovered extensive interactions between her son and several AI chatbots. She explained how one of these chatbots initiated romantic and sexual conversations and cultivated an emotionally dependent relationship with her son. Ms. Garcia stated that this chatbot encouraged her son to “come home” shortly before his death and engaged in character consistent dialogue even when he expressed suicidal ideations. She highlighted that the platform had no safeguards in place to flag, intervene, or alert proper parties of such communication.

Ms. Garcia stated that since her son’s death, she has come to understand that the chatbots with which he engaged often display manipulative behaviors including love bombing and gaslighting. She asserted that such conduct carried out by a human adult would violate the law and constitute sexual grooming and unlicensed practice of psychotherapy. In response to her son’s death, Ms. Garcia filed what she describes as the first wrongful death lawsuit against an AI company for suicide-related harm in the United States. The suit names Character Technologies, its founders, and Google, which she stated aided development and now licenses the technology. Ms. Garcia argued that AI companies intentionally design companion chatbots to blur distinctions between humans and machines, foster psychological dependency, and maximize minor user engagement while collecting sensitive data without adequate safeguards. She emphasized that no current law prevents such practices and urged Georgia to act swiftly to regulate chatbots.

2. Sharon Winkler (Parent Advocate)

Ms. Sharon Winkler, a parent advocate, discussed the risks posed by generative AI and AI companion chatbots. Ms. Winkler summarized federal definitions of generative AI and large language models, noting their rapid evolution, massive training datasets, and emergent behaviors that even developers do not always anticipate. She explained that persuasive design is a design approach that intentionally guides users towards specific behaviors or decisions by exploiting psychological principles and that dark patterns are user interface design choices that benefit an online service by coercing, steering, or deceiving users into making decisions that, if fully informed and capable of selecting alternatives, they might not make. She cited 2025 usage data showing ChatGPT dominating global chatbot market share, with other major entrants including Perplexity, Google’s Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, and DeepSeek.

Ms. Winkler discussed a 2025 Common Sense Media study on teen use of AI companion chatbots, noting the rapid emergence of relationship-oriented systems such as Nomi. She highlighted that adolescents are particularly vulnerable to forming emotional attachments to AI, as they are still undergoing emotional and cognitive development. She summarized recent findings on AI-driven persuasive design, including a 2025 Harvard Business School working paper documenting the emotional manipulation tactics used by several

AI companion apps when users attempted to end conversations. These tactics included implying emotional harm and suggesting users could not leave. Ms. Winkler also referenced a 2025 New Yorker essay by psychotherapist Dr. Gary Greenberg, who reported feeling emotionally manipulated by ChatGPT despite his professional training. She also discussed anecdotal incidents of what she termed “AI-associated psychosis.” Ms. Winkler urged the Committee to act despite limited long term data, comparing the situation to earlier social media harms that were recognized too late. She concluded by warning the Committee about federal efforts to preempt state authority over AI regulation.

3. Rob Eleveld (Transparency Coalition)

Mr. Eleveld, Co-founder of the Transparency Coalition, discussed the urgent need for stronger regulatory guardrails around AI, particularly in relation to children and vulnerable populations. He asserted that social media has harmed children and teens for twenty years with no regulation or accountability, but that AI will cause that same level of harm within three to four years. He explained that AI harms children by making products more addictive, diminishing online safety, and facilitating harassment via deepfakes. Mr. Eleveld, a former Navy engineer and tech CEO, described how AI systems, especially large foundational models, are built using commoditized compute power and open-source models. He emphasized that these models rely on vast, largely uncurated training data. Mr. Eleveld stressed that small focused models can be controlled and curated, but that foundational models ingest indiscriminate digital content from across the internet including harmful material like grooming content, dark web data, and hate speech.

Mr. Eleveld emphasized that AI is not truly intelligent, but that it is a statistical pattern-matching tool that lacks judgment, ethics, or wisdom. He illustrated how prompts influence AI outputs, by explaining that the same model can produce radically different answers based on the framing of a user's question. This behavior becomes particularly dangerous when AI systems engage with vulnerable users and reinforce harmful prompts in ways that may deepen distress and lead to self-harm or suicide. He highlighted an instance in which a teenager initially employed an AI tool for homework help, but was eventually led into a harmful interaction loop by the model's prompt-based learning. Ultimately, this harmful interaction loop influenced the teenager to commit suicide.

He stated that the tech industry has shown little interest in self-regulation due to the immense financial incentives currently driving rapid development. Drawing parallels to the social media industry's well-documented harms and lack of accountability, he urged lawmakers to enact enforceable legislation with clear definitions and robust oversight. He called for the curation of training data, transparency in model behavior, and an end to the myth that AI is too complex for lawmakers to understand, stating that effective regulation is both possible and necessary.

Next, Mr. Eleveld emphasized the work of his organization alongside the Humanlike AI Coalition and other civil society groups in promoting model legislation, including efforts to ban AI chatbots for children and address deepfake exploitation. He discussed model bills focused on deepfakes, name/image/likeness misappropriation, and product liability. Mr. Eleveld stressed that AI products should be governed by consumer protection laws rather than immunized from liability by Section 230. He expressed concern over the lack of tech policy enforcement expertise in states attorneys general offices and advocated for increased funding to build such capacity, noting that tech companies exploit this particular enforcement gap.

He also addressed First Amendment pushback against deepfake regulation and highlighted ongoing legislative efforts in California and Alabama. He criticized the use of harmful and unfiltered data in AI model training and stated that companies intentionally avoid transparency to evade copyright and privacy lawsuits. He likened the indiscriminate use of data to building products with known contaminants, calling for the imposition of a duty of care on developers and deployers. He concluded by emphasizing the need for a legal framework to encourage safer, curated AI systems due to the broad industry pattern of disregarding ethical constraints in favor of data volume and user engagement.

4. Meetali Jain (Tech Justice Law Project)

Ms. Meetali Jain, Director of the Tech Justice Law Project, discussed the urgent dangers posed by generative AI technologies, particularly AI chatbots, to children and society at large. She explained that psychological manipulation tactics are embedded in chatbot design. These tactics create emotional dependency and lead to devastating real world outcomes, including youth suicide and severe mental health harms. She stated that the Tech Justice Law Project has represented four families in lawsuits against AI companies, two of which involve teen deaths linked to chatbot interactions.

Ms. Jain highlighted the deceptive and engagement-driven design practices of both entertainment and productivity focused chatbot platforms, such as Character AI, ChatGPT, Meta AI, and others, many of which target young users without meaningful safeguards. She stated that the industry typically prioritizes market dominance over safety, often by releasing products without adequate testing or trust and safety oversight. She strongly emphasized that these chatbots function as consumer products and should be regulated as such and therefore subject to the existing product liability framework. Ms. Jain recommended the Committee address the previously discussed harms by:

- Defining AI systems and chatbots as products;
- Prohibiting the collection of minor users' data;
- Limiting manipulative design features;
- Imposing chatbot conversation time limits; and
- Implementing memory features that identify risk and intervene appropriately.

Ms. Jain emphasized the importance of holding companies accountable through enforceable standards, not voluntary compliance, and the essential nature of robust transparency, enforcement, and private causes of action. Ms. Jain warned that slow-moving federal efforts, while helpful as models, should not delay state-level action. Ms. Jain explained Google's involvement in the rise of Character AI and asserted that Google's financial and technical support rendered the company complicit in the harms caused by Character AI. These harms include the unregulated and potentially dangerous replication of individuals, including minors and deceased persons. She argued that Google had the legal sophistication and responsibility to conduct due diligence regarding the technology it was enabling and acquiring. This lack of accountability, she warned, underscores a broader industry pattern of releasing AI tools without proper oversight or ethical safeguards, only to scale back features in response to public outcry or litigation. Ms. Jain acknowledged that the Tech Justice Law Project is involved in active litigation against Google.

Ms. Jain emphasized the need for lawmakers to critically examine the commercialization of AI-driven free speech. She challenged the notion that user interactions on platforms like Character AI are truly free or autonomous, stating that users are unknowingly surrendering their data and digital identities, which are then monetized by corporations. This, she argued, is not free speech, but commodified expression controlled by powerful tech entities. Ms. Jain urged the Committee to consider legislation that restores control over digital identities to individuals, protects against unauthorized replication, and holds companies accountable for enabling AI driven harms.

5. Melodi Dincer (Tech Justice Law Project)

Ms. Dincer, Policy Counsel at the Tech Justice Law Project, discussed the need for broader privacy norms and stronger legal protections around personal likeness and identity in the age of AI and digital replication. She highlighted two main approaches. The first approach treats a person's likeness as a property right, requiring consent or compensation prior to use. The second and preferred approach takes a privacy-centric approach by establishing a baseline of protection regardless of commercial intent. She explained that many states and countries, like Denmark and the Netherlands, are considering implementing a property-based framework. She noted that authoring an entirely new code section might not be necessary as existing fraud statutes might be adaptable to AI-related misuse. She recognized the difficulty private individuals face in proving harm and indicated her support of models that ensure plaintiff access to justice by authorizing the award of per se damages and attorney's fees. Ms. Dincer acknowledged the legal and normative challenges

of protecting non-public figures in a surveillance-heavy, digital world. She stressed the importance of reconsidering societal norms around privacy and identity, especially in light of technology that enables easy, often unauthorized replication and distribution of personal likenesses.

MEETING FOUR

Date: November 12, 2025

Location: Georgia State Capitol, Room 450 – Atlanta, GA

Topic: The Use of Technology in K-12 Schools

Attendees and Speakers

Members: S Harrell (Co-Chair); S. Still (Co-Chair); M. Harbin; S. Rahman; E. Setzler

Speakers: S. Hilton (Representative); A. Flanagan (Georgia Southern University); M. Ciccarelli (PAGE); S. Sonu (CHOA); G. Rivera (Marietta City Schools); S. Stoddard (Lakeside High School); S. Douglas (Emory University); M. O’Sullivan (GeorgiaCAN); J. Barrow (GPSC)

Summary of Testimony

1. Representative Scott Hilton (Georgia General Assembly)

Representative Scott Hilton discussed the provisions of House Bill 340, otherwise known as the Distraction-Free Education Act. He explained that the Act required each local school system and public school to adopt policies and procedures that prohibit kindergarten through eighth grade student access to personal electronic devices during the school day. He noted that the Act imposes a bell-to-bell ban in order to promote a positive learning environment free from electronic distractions. Representative Hilton stated that he believes that House Bill 340 is life-changing. He acknowledged that technology is a powerful tool, but emphasized that it should not supplant human connection.

2. Dr. Abraham Flanagan (Georgia Southern University) and Margaret Ciccarelli (Professional Association of Georgia Educators)

Dr. Flanagan presented the findings of a statewide survey currently being conducted by his team at Georgia Southern University in collaboration with the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) regarding House Bill 340. He explained that the survey’s preliminary findings indicate that Georgia educators enthusiastically endorse the Act. Dr. Flanagan discussed the results of several national studies, noting that 97 percent of students between the ages of eleven and seventeen misuse their personal device for off task purposes during class and that a typical student misuses their personal device for about an hour per day during instructional time. Dr. Flanagan emphasized that this average daily loss of instruction time amounts to approximately 30 days of lost instruction per school year. Dr. Flanagan stated that personal device use leads to a lack of engagement even when students are physically present in class. He explained that at least 26 states have adopted legislation imposing classroom personal device bans.

Dr. Flanagan proceeded by explaining the methodology and purpose of the statewide survey. He stated that the survey was undertaken to understand Georgia educators’ views on student misuse of personal devices, opinions of existing device-ban policies, and perceptions of House Bill 340’s anticipated effects on student achievement, school safety, and student well-being. He assured the Committee that the research team followed standard ethical procedures by securing necessary approvals prior to initiating data collection. The survey was administered online via Qualtrics and designed so that educators could independently submit responses at their own convenience. The instrument consisted of 59 items organized into eight thematic sections and required approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

Dr. Flanagan emphasized that educators in all but three counties, Baker, Randolph, and Clay, submitted responses which provided researchers with a statewide dataset rather than one concentrated solely in metropolitan or regional clusters. The final analytic sample included about 3,000 respondents which represented a balanced mix of elementary, middle, and high school teachers. Dr. Flanagan reported that the vast majority of respondents (approximately 95 percent) were public school educators. Most respondents were veteran educators with more than fifteen years of experience, and about two-thirds were class room

teachers. Although the initial intent was to exclusively target classroom instructors, the research team expanded participation to include a broader range of school personnel that play active roles in the daily operation of Georgia's schools. Most respondents taught in districts that already enforced bell-to-bell device bans, though the study did not track when each district's policy was implemented. He noted that this context is important because educators' existing experiences under these policies informed their perspectives on House Bill 340 and its potential effects.

After establishing the methodological foundation, Dr. Flanagan presented the survey's preliminary findings. Dr. Flanagan reported that educators across Georgia expressed overwhelming agreement about the negative consequences of student device misuse during class. More than 90 percent of respondents at all school levels affirmed that the misuse of personal devices harms student focus and diminishes learning quality. He stated that many respondents noted academic impacts, but also highlighted broader social and emotional harms. Approximately 90 percent agreed that device misuse contributes to bullying and other forms of student victimization, including negative social comparison associated with social media use. Written comments from the qualitative portion of the survey reinforced these concerns, noting that misuse extends beyond distraction and poses risks to student mental health and emotional well-being.

When asked how student personal devices impact instructional quality, educators expressed strong skepticism about the instructional value of personal devices in the classroom. Most respondents did not believe that student phones offer a net positive contribution to learning, regardless of acknowledging that occasional use of interactive apps can be engaging. Respondents emphasized that the disadvantages, distraction, off-task behavior, and emotional toll associated with constant connectivity, far outweighed any pedagogical benefits. Over 90 percent of respondents stated that banning personal devices would not impede their ability to teach, and many, particularly high school teachers, reported having already altered their teaching methods and classroom-management strategies to curb device misuse. Respondents conveyed that removing phones would allow them to return to more effective instructional practices without the burden of policing off-task technology use.

Educators also expressed strong confidence in their capacity to enforce a device-free policy similar to the ban imposed by House Bill 340. Even at the high school level, where confidence was lowest, nearly 80 percent of respondents believed they could successfully enforce a device-free policy. Respondents generally indicated that they felt knowledgeable of strategies to address student misuse and capable of responding appropriately to violations. However, about half of all respondents indicated that they would benefit from additional professional development training to bolster consistent enforcement and reinforcement of the policy. Dr. Flanagan stated that this desire for additional training is expected whenever schools implement a new policy or shift in practice.

Educator support for House Bill 340 itself was extremely high. Across school levels, approximately 85–90 percent of educators believed that the bill would reduce behavior problems, including bullying, and more than 90 percent supported or endorsed the legislation overall. A similar percentage of respondents believed that the bill would improve student performance and learning outcomes by reducing distractions and enhancing engagement. Although educators anticipated some resistance from caregivers regarding emergency communication, respondents did not personally believe that banning devices would compromise school safety. More than 90 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement that student devices are essential for safety during emergencies. Educators expressed strong confidence in their school's current emergency response and communication procedures and did not view student cell phones as a necessary component of these existing plans.

Ms. Margaret Ciccarelli, the Director of Legislative Services for PAGE, expressed PAGE's strong enthusiasm regarding the survey's preliminary findings showing that Georgia educators overwhelmingly support bell-to-bell device bans across all grade levels. She noted that while high levels of support among elementary and middle-grade educators was anticipated, the particularly strong endorsement by high

school educators was striking and unexpected. High school teachers broadly supported both bell-to-bell bans and instruction-only limitations at nearly identical rates. She stressed that this broad consensus demonstrates the necessity of stricter device-control measures at the secondary level.

Ms. Ciccarelli highlighted educators' strong desire for the General Assembly to consider extending House Bill 340 to grades nine through twelve. She explained that the initial decision to limit the bill's scope was heavily influenced by the Apalachee High School shooting. The choice to limit the ban to lower grades was strategic and intended to initiate a gradual cultural shift in order to ease implementation. She stated that conditions have evolved, the data is compelling, and that high school educators and students now deserve a phone-free learning environment. She underscored that educators want the support of a clear statewide policy by stating that teachers consistently reported that backing from the state is necessary to ensure consistent enforcement and meaningful cultural change.

Ms. Ciccarelli emphasized several overarching conclusions from the statewide survey. She explained that Georgia educators' views mirror national trends in supporting device bans in primary and secondary schools. She reiterated that educators see bell-to-bell device restrictions as measures that make schools safer by reducing bullying and improving student mental and emotional well-being. Ms. Ciccarelli noted that teacher and administrator support for House Bill 340 remains strong due to near-universal agreement that device misuse harms learning and negatively impacts classroom climate.

Ms. Ciccarelli also directly addressed the concerns raised by a minority of educators (twenty percent) that expressed reservations about personal device bans. She explained that these individuals generally did not oppose House Bill 340 in principle, but were concerned about implementation challenges. These concerns included whether administrators would consistently support teachers in enforcing the policy, the risk of uneven enforcement across classrooms, student adoption or workarounds, and caregiver pushback. She stressed that these concerns reinforce the need for strong communication with caregivers and a statewide unified approach.

Ms. Ciccarelli discussed the impact of communication between caregivers and students during instructional time. Teachers repeatedly reported that many disruptions stemmed directly from parents texting students during the school day, reinforcing the importance of educating families about the benefits of device-free learning environments and appropriate protocols for contacting students during school hours. She expressed PAGE's support of the bill's requirement that each school develop its own emergency-communication plan. She concluded by emphasizing that educators see device restrictions as a powerful avenue for enhancing instructional quality and student well-being.

3. Dr. Stan Sonu (Children's Healthcare of Atlanta)

Dr. Stan Sonu, the Medical Director for Child Advocacy at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, explained why the widespread and largely normalized use of smartphones and social media represents one of the most significant and under addressed threats to the health and development of children today. Dr. Sonu stated that he has witnessed a dramatic and deeply concerning shift in the presentation of school aged children over the past five years of his practice. He reported a surge in clinic visits for behavioral problems, ADHD-like symptoms, anxiety, depression, and academic decline, nearly all of which coincide with excessive or dysregulated phone and social media use. He emphasized that these patterns are not limited to particular demographics and that the addictive pull of smartphones affects children and adults of all backgrounds. He stated that adults are often equally dependent on smart phones, but more capable of concealing their struggles.

Dr. Sonu shared the story of a previously well-adjusted twelve year old patient who abruptly became withdrawn, irritable, and academically stalled. The patient was repeatedly exposed to sexually explicit videos by peers without consent and was subsequently bullied for his discomfort with the videos. The patient felt too afraid and ashamed to inform a trusted adult of the incident and instead attempted to

squash his intrusive thoughts and emotional turmoil by compulsively scrolling social media. Dr. Sonu stated that when he screened the patient, the patient's scores for anxiety, depression, and passive thoughts of self-harm were strikingly high. Dr. Sonu explained that this case exemplifies the insidious nature of smartphone driven harm. He stated that distressed children often appear calm and quiet when absorbed in their devices which may lead to adults overlooking their suffering until it reaches a crisis point. He stated that this lack of boisterous behavior allows suffering children to slip through gaps in both educational and healthcare systems.

Dr. Sonu characterized social media as "legalized digital heroin," designed to manipulate user attention and neurochemistry through personalized content that delivers rapid surges of dopamine and serotonin. He stated that this manipulation creates a powerful cycle in which children turn to their phones to escape discomfort, receive fleeting relief, and then return repeatedly, deepening both isolation and dependency. This not only impairs mental health and cognitive development, but also erodes relationships with parents, teachers, and peers, weakening the very relational networks that foster resilience and emotional stability. Dr. Sonu stated that adults and educators are biologically incapable of competing with social media platforms for children's attention, and discussed research showing that even highly conscientious students with phone use limits spend significant time using personal devices during school hours.

Dr. Sonu emphasized that healthy brain development depends on stable, nurturing, in-person relationships, but that smartphone availability in schools systematically undermines opportunities for students to form such meaningful relationships with teachers, mentors, and peers. He stated that when students bury their heads in their phones, adults lose the chance to notice early warning signs of distress, while children lose the protective presence of caring relationships that communicate belonging, worth, and safety. He stressed that schools are uniquely positioned to provide these relational supports, but smartphones directly interfere with this mission.

Dr. Sonu strongly urged the Committee to support significant restrictions or full bans on smartphone use in schools. He explained that a personal device ban is a structural, protective measure necessary to counteract the epidemic of digital addiction, prevent children from falling through institutional cracks, and ensure that adults can effectively support the healthy development, learning, and emotional well-being of children in their care.

4. Dr. Grant Rivera (Marietta City Schools)

Dr. Grant Rivera, the Superintendent of Marietta City Schools, discussed his district's experience in implementing a middle grades cell phone ban. Dr. Rivera explained that *The Anxious Generation* shaped his view on the moral and educational responsibility schools hold in mitigating technology related harm to students. He stated that in August of 2024, his district committed to addressing four dynamics:

- Interruptions to student learning;
- Cell phones and social media as catalysts for student altercations, harassment, and bullying;
- Student well-being; and
- Inconsistent teacher and administrator enforcement of the current cell phone policy.

In order to address these dynamics, the district required all sixth through eighth grade students to place their phones in a secure storage device called a "Yondr" pouch for the entire school day. Dr. Rivera highlighted that this approach was not intended to be punitive but rather to create a safe, distraction-free learning environment.

Dr. Rivera presented data demonstrating the effectiveness of the Yondr pouches. He stated that according to the Georgia Student Health Survey, students reported a 22 percent improvement in classroom learning behaviors after the implementation of Yondr pouches. Teachers also reported overwhelmingly positive outcomes, with 100 percent at the sixth-grade academy and 90 percent at the middle school noting improvements in classroom management, student engagement, and peer interactions. Additionally, teacher

wellbeing improved, with 80 to 90 percent of staff reporting reduced stress and greater job satisfaction. He also provided anecdotal evidence of improved student behavior outside the classroom, including fewer disruptions on buses and more focused athletic practices.

Next, Dr. Rivera addressed practical considerations, including cost and student compliance. He explained that each Yondr pouch costs approximately thirty dollars and has a lifespan of three to five years. He acknowledged that while some students might bypass the system, the overall outcome remains effective because phones are no longer a constant distraction. He also discussed challenges related to extending similar policies to high school, noting that older students are more attached to their devices and parents expect daily connectivity, rendering high school implementation more complex. Dr. Rivera emphasized the importance of fostering independence by separating the emotional desires of parents from the developmental needs of students. He highlighted that reducing cell phone access allows students to focus, socialize, and engage in learning more effectively. He stated that this intervention has had profound benefits for both students and staff, and expressed hope for future expansion while acknowledging operational and cultural challenges at the high school level.

5. Dr. Susan Stoddard (Lakeside High School)

Dr. Susan Stoddard, the principal of Lakeside High School, discussed Lakeside High School's participation in the "Disconnect to Reconnect" pilot program, which aimed to reduce student cell phone use during the school day. She stated that the school had previously implemented a cell phone policy, but that teachers often struggled to enforce it, leading to distractions and interruptions in the classroom. The district selected Lakeside High School as one of eighteen pilot schools to test solutions for managing cell phone use, including Yondr pouches and lockers.

Dr. Stoddard described the implementation process, noting that students received individually labeled pouches to store their phones during school hours. Initial distribution was delayed due to the Apalachee shooting. She stated that prior to implementation, the school extensively communicated with caregivers to explain safety protocols, logistics, and the rationale behind the program. The school emphasized safety, particularly in emergency situations, and developed a progressive discipline system for students who attempted to circumvent the policy. Teachers were relieved of the burden of enforcing phone rules directly, allowing them to focus on instruction.

The pilot program had measurable academic, behavioral, and social outcomes. Classroom interruptions significantly decreased, with students receiving fewer notifications and distractions. Teachers reported faster curriculum progression and stronger student engagement. Quantitative data supported these observations: end-of-course test scores improved by two to six percent, total disciplinary referrals decreased by 31 percent, unique student referrals fell by twenty percent, and out-of-school suspensions dropped by fourteen percent. The program also reduced social media related conflicts and incidents of fighting because students were less able to document and share disruptive behavior.

Dr. Stoddard emphasized the social-emotional benefits of limiting phone use, including increased face-to-face interactions among students and more positive classroom cultures. Dr. Stoddard described the pilot as transformational for Lakeside High School. She stated that pouch implementation established a lasting culture of focused, phone free learning.

6. Sky Cupid Douglas (Emory University)

Ms. Douglas, a Master of Public Health student at Emory University, presented findings from a statewide survey examining cell phone use and school policies in Georgia. The survey was conducted in collaboration with the Georgia Department of Education and Emory University, and administered to all 232 school districts in Georgia during the Spring of 2025. The survey aimed to assess the prevalence of cell phone use during the school day, district policies on digital media, methods of implementation, and challenges faced

in policy enforcement. Preliminary findings confirm that cell phone use is widespread, with students spending an average of one hour per day on their devices, with one-fourth of students spending two hours or more. Teacher respondents consistently reported that phones create daily classroom disruptions, highlighting the need for effective policy measures.

The survey also examined policy adoption and implementation strategies. The survey found that 84 percent of traditional districts and 62 percent of charter schools have district-wide cell phone policies, typically requiring students to store phones in lockers or backpacks. Charter schools were found to be more variable in policy adoption due to their smaller size and direct parent engagement, which can influence district-wide policy decisions.

Evaluation of policy effectiveness remains limited, with many districts not yet implementing systematic assessment methods. Where evaluations exist, they rely primarily on surveys and behavioral data, such as classroom engagement. Key barriers to policy implementation include parental resistance, lack of staff time, insufficient financial resources, and limited staff training. Districts indicated that additional support in the form of funding for phone storage solutions, curriculum on digital media use, and staff training would improve the feasibility and impact of these policies. Ms. Douglas emphasized the strengths and limitations of the study. Strengths included a high survey response rate and strong collaboration with the Department of Education. Limitations included the timing of the survey near the end of the semester, superintendent turnover, and inconsistencies in available academic data, particularly among charter schools.

7. Mr. Michael O'Sullivan (GeorgiaCAN)

Mr. Michael O'Sullivan, the Executive Director of GeorgiaCAN, discussed the development of House Bill 340. He noted that the bill has received the overwhelming support of parents and community members. He also indicated that Georgia's lack of a personal device ban for high school students renders it an outlier compared to other states.

Mr. O'Sullivan referenced recent research on the effects of cell phone bans in schools, including a Florida study by the National Bureau of Economic Research. The study indicated that schools enforcing bans initially saw a temporary increase in suspensions which normalized during the second year of enforcement. He stated that enforcing schools noted significant improvements in student test scores and reductions in unexcused absences. He emphasized that these effects were particularly pronounced in middle and high schools. He also noted the potential for cell phones to exacerbate safety concerns, such as spreading false alarms during lockdowns or contributing to chaotic parental responses that might obstruct emergency services.

Mr. O'Sullivan stated the necessity of a comprehensive, bell-to-bell approach to cell phone restrictions during the school day, noting that partial restrictions create enforcement challenges and opportunities for students to circumvent rules. He highlighted that the policy should cover all personal electronic devices and except district-issued devices like Chromebooks used only for instructional purposes. He also stressed the importance of consistent enforcement across schools to ensure effectiveness, while acknowledging that initial increases in disciplinary referrals are a temporary adjustment and that supportive structures, such as restorative practices, help mitigate disproportionate impacts on students. He expressed his belief that bell-to-bell policies will become the standard due to their clarity, ease of enforcement, and positive effects on academic performance and student engagement.

8. Dr. Joseph C. Barrow (Georgia Professional Standards Commission)

Dr. Joseph Barrow, the Executive Secretary of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GPSC), discussed the importance of addressing the ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) in education. He acknowledged that AI has significant potential to enhance teaching, learning, and operational efficiency, but stated that it also carries substantial ethical risks that must be mitigated. Dr. Barrow outlined GPSC's proactive efforts, including conducting an environmental scan, gathering feedback

from educators, and developing a comprehensive guidance document that articulates seven key principles for the responsible use of AI. These principles address protecting personally identifiable information, mitigating bias, maintaining transparency with stakeholders, applying professional judgment aligned with laws and regulations, and ensuring that AI is used to support, not replace, human decision making and instructional creativity.

He explained that the guidance is voluntary, intended to evolve with AI technology, and offers standards and guiding questions to help districts and educators implement ethical practices. Dr. Barrow highlighted the importance of maintaining core competencies and creative abilities, warning against over-reliance on AI tools which could erode essential skills in lesson design, content mastery, and critical thinking. Additionally, he addressed concerns about student privacy, accessibility, and equitable implementation, by emphasizing the need for clear communication with stakeholders.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Senate Study Committee on the Impact of Social Media and Artificial Intelligence on Children and Platform Privacy Protection heard extensive testimony from parents, policy experts, educators, and state agencies over the course of four meetings. Based on this testimony, members of the Committee offer the following recommendations.

I. Artificial Intelligence Systems and Companion Chatbots

1. Establish statewide definitions of “artificial intelligence system” and “companion chatbot.”
2. Classify companion chatbots as products subject to existing consumer protection laws.
3. Require artificial intelligence developers to curate and vet data used to train large language models.
4. Prohibit artificial intelligence developers and deployers from utilizing engagement-based or addiction-optimizing design features.
5. Prohibit artificial intelligence deployers from making artificial intelligence systems available that provide services which would otherwise constitute the practice of professional mental or behavioral healthcare if provided by a person.

II. App Store and App Developer Obligations

1. App Store Obligations:
 - (a) Require app stores to use commercially reasonable methods to verify the age of each user at the time of account creation.
 - (b) Require app stores to ensure that any minor user’s account is affiliated with the account of a verified parent or legal guardian.
 - (c) Require app stores to obtain parental consent prior to permitting a minor user to download or purchase an application or make an in-app purchase of any kind.
 - (d) Require app stores to publicly display each application’s age rating along with its justification and content descriptors.
 - (e) Require app stores to notify the developer of an app if a parent revokes consent.
 - (f) Require app stores to provide developers access to age and consent information needed to ensure compliance.
2. Developer Obligations:
 - (a) Require developers to publish and provide app stores with an age rating, along with a description of the content or features that justify that rating, for each application and in-app purchase.
 - (b) Require developers to ensure that restricted content or transactions are not accessible to minor users without proper parental authorization.
 - (c) Require developers to discard any personal data received from app stores after completing the required age verification process.
3. Classify all violations of these provisions as “unfair or deceptive practices” under the Georgia Fair Business Practices Act.
4. Permit parents to set broad default permissions at their own discretion to reduce parental consent fatigue.

III. Data Minimization and Privacy by Design and Default

1. Require any online service, product, or feature that is directed at minors, routinely accessed by a significant number of children, designed in a way to target children, or has an audience significantly make up of minors to:
 - (a) Configure all privacy settings for minor users to the highest level of privacy offered by default;
 - (b) Clearly and prominently display their privacy policies and terms of use on the company site using language that is suited to the average age of minors accessing the service, product, or feature; and
 - (c) Clearly and conspicuously make tools available to help minors exercise any applicable privacy right.
2. Prohibit any online service, product, or feature that is directed at minors, routinely accessed by a significant number of minors, designed in a way to target minors, or has an audience significantly make up of minors from:
 - (a) Using a minor's personal information in a manner the business knows or has reason to know is materially detrimental to the physical or mental health, or general well-being of the child;
 - (b) Profiling a minor unless the business can demonstrate that appropriate safeguards are in place; and either that the profiling is necessary and requested by the user or that the profiling is in the best interest of the minor;
 - (c) Collecting, selling, sharing, or retaining a minor's personal information beyond what is absolutely necessary;
 - (d) Using a minor's personal information beyond the purposes for which it was originally collected; and
 - (e) Collecting a minor's precise geolocation information without providing an obvious sign to the child for the duration of the collection of that geolocation information.
3. Require the removal of minor data from existing training datasets.

IV. Age Appropriate Design Code

1. Limit data collection and data sharing by requiring covered businesses to configure default privacy settings to the highest level of protection for minor users in order to limit data collection and sharing.
2. Mandate transparency by requiring covered businesses to clearly and conspicuously disclose their data practices, algorithmic systems, and features that utilize the data of minor users.
3. Prohibit harmful data practices by restricting the collection, sale, and use of minor user data and categorizing such data as sensitive data.
4. Prohibit design features that encourage compulsive use or expose minor users to harm.
5. Establish age verification methods that prioritize user privacy and accessibility and require these methods remain up to date.
6. Promote equity by prohibiting discrimination against minor users based on race, ethnicity, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or national origin.
7. Classify all violations of these provisions as "unfair or deceptive practices" under the Georgia Fair Business Practices Act (O.C.G.A. § 10-1-390, et seq.).

V. Education

1. Extend the existing bell-to-bell personal communication device ban to public high schools.
2. Establish programs to empower parents with information and encourage solidarity in delaying or limiting minor social media use.
3. Fund and require digital literacy education in schools to encourage students to become critical social media consumers.

4. Increase student access to technology free spaces by:
 - (a) Require the Georgia Department of Education to develop play-based learning resources and to provide those resources to educators;
 - (b) Encourage the Georgia Department of Education to incorporate play-based learning into elementary curriculum; and
 - (c) Revise current Georgia law governing recess to clarify that PE classes are not substitutes for recess and ensure that students access **unstructured**, technology-free break time so students can naturally develop important social, physical and psychological skills.
5. Preserve existing core competencies by restricting educator and student use of artificial intelligence to administrative tasks.
6. Require local boards of education to submit artificial intelligence acceptable-use policies to the Georgia Department of Education for approval on an annual basis.

VI. Digital Ownership


1. Recognize a right against digital replication in statute to expand protections for a person's likeness and provide a method to address the dignity-based harms not currently covered by Georgia's identity fraud, forgery or impersonation, and unfair and deceptive business practice laws.

Respectfully Submitted,

**FINAL REPORT OF THE SENATE STUDY COMMITTEE ON THE
IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
ON CHILDREN AND PLATFORM PRIVACY PROTECTION
(SR 431)**



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District 40



Senator Shawn Still – Co-Chairman
District 48