

In Support of the California Age Appropriate Design Code

March 28, 2022

To the California State Assembly

The undersigned are writing to express support for the California Age Appropriate Design Code Act (AB 2273, Buffy Wicks-D and Jordan Cunningham-R).

Children across the globe are facing an unprecedented mental health crisis. Even before the onset of COVID-19 and subsequent social distancing and isolation, teen suicide was on the rise; in the US the [CDC](#) found that between 2007 to 2017 the suicide rate among people aged 10 to 24 increased by 56%. And in the year between spring of 2020 and 2021 emergency room visits for girls ages 12 to 17 [increased by 50%](#).

In 2020, [81% of 14 to 22-year-olds](#) said they used social media either “daily” or “almost constantly.” This is by design. As private companies beholden to shareholders, performance incentives for product developers and executives are tied to profit and therefore time spent on their platform. Social media platforms and tech companies do not design these services with their youngest and most vulnerable users in mind.

Ensuring the safety of tech products is long overdue. We have nutrition labels on food packaging, rigorous testing for cribs and car seats, and yet the technology children use daily from the youngest of ages have little to no safeguards.

- 75% of the top social media platforms use [AI to recommend children's profiles to strangers](#).
- Of the top 100 free apps for kids in Google Play [1 in 3 have banner ads](#), including ads for adult content.
- [60% of school-based apps](#) share kids' data with third parties.
- A leaked internal survey found that “[1 in 3 teenage girls is exacerbating body image problems](#)” on Instagram, and that 6% of US teens link their interest in suicide directly to the platform.

More than 80% of Americans say they want legislation that requires social media platforms to [take action to minimize harms to minors](#). We agree with President Biden, who in his State of the Union address said that “we must hold social media platforms accountable for the national experiment they’re conducting on our children for profit.” California has the opportunity to lead the nation in protecting our children online and prioritizing well-being over profit, childhood over exploitation.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of California teens and parents (68%) say that social networks do a poor job explaining what they do with [users' data](#). And we know the framework behind AB2273 works. In September 2021, the [Age Appropriate Design Code](#) went into effect in the UK. Since then, tech companies have made changes to products that children use to ensure their data isn't needlessly collected, they are not

deceived by dark patterns, and that product design is not detrimental to their health and well-being.

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

Sincerely,

