

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5474

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AND MINORS.

Vote Date: 3/6/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/6/2025

File No.:

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CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Kathy Kennedy, 119th Dist.
Rep. Trenee McGee, 116th Dist.
Rep. Rebecca Martinez, 22nd Dist.
Rep. William Heffernan, 115th Dist.

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Committee on Children

REASONS FOR BILL:

HB 5474 seeks to create a safer space for minors on the internet specifically through social media platforms.

The bill aims to pressure owners of social media platforms to create an online safety center that will at a minimum provide consumers with information and/or tools that prevent cyberbullying, platform mechanisms that limit harmful or unwanted behavior, and information concerning effects on mental health from social media.

The legislation also aims to provide a default setting that prevents adults from contacting minors through private message and to refrain from systems that would extend a minors' use of the service.

The Attorney General may also require the controller to disclose a plan to establish and implement the above changes if it is relevant to the Attorney General's investigation.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Connecticut State Representative, MJ Shannon:](#) supports this bill and mentions that Teens currently spend an average of five hours a day on social media, yet 70% of parents of children aged 10-15 are unaware of their kids' social media use. By passing HB 5474, the state can help protect children's mental health and put families back in control.

[NAMI Connecticut Inc., Public Policy Manager, Thomas Burr:](#) supports this bill and adds that no one should be subjected to practices that would worsen mental health and furthermore public policy should seek to protect it. They add that there is positives and benefits to mental health through social media but overall supports policy that facility research in the risk and benefits of social media.

[Daniel Del Prete:](#) supports this bill as a father of seven children; he mentions that his 16 year old son just got a cell phone and that at that age their brains are still developing and that social media can interfere with the development.

[CEA, President, Kate Dias:](#) supports this bill and adds that educators report that these algorithms promote addiction and harmful content, contributing to increased anxiety, low self-esteem, and poor focus among students. The bill would limit algorithmic targeting and require parental approval for social media use, empowering parents to safeguard their children's mental and emotional health.

[Mrs. Courtney Hessberger:](#) supports this bill.

[Daniel Mowerman:](#) supports this bill and says that childhood has been eroding and we need to trust families over social media companies. They mention the mental health crisis we are facing and that parents should play a role in regulating social media.

[Alison Rivera:](#) supports this bill.

[Mr. Edward Whitbread:](#) supports this bill as a loving father who does not want to see their child's social skills and self esteem lowered, they also mention they were a 25 year career fire fighter who has seen firsthand the effects of social media on children. He ends that this bill can save lives.

[Michael Audie:](#) supports this bill and reminds the importance of family and the parents' responsibility to educate the child. They mention statistics from the CDC and American Psychological Association.

[Author, Leann Browett:](#) supports this bill and mentions the terrible effects of overuse of the internet on teens. She goes on to compare her book to the current state of the online use with teens, and urges the legislature to pass this bill.

[Connecticut Voices for Children, Research – Policy Associate, Carmen Clarkin:](#) supports this bill and agrees of shifting the burden of compliance on to social media companies instead of

parents and children. They add that children are particularly susceptible to deceptive design practices.

[UConn Dept. Ed. Leader, Assistant Professors, Adam McCready and Katherine Rohn:](#) support this bill and shares research from the University of Connecticut that explores the relationship between social media use and mental health among students. and that parental control alone is unlikely to resolve issues. Education on digital literacy for students, parents, and school staff, along with targeted legislation to limit harmful algorithmic content, is recommended to promote healthier social media use.

[Michelle Gilmore:](#) supports this bill and states we need to save our children from the affects of social media.

[Sophomore at CT High School, Elia Sophia Guillet:](#) supports this bill and gives anecdotal stories on the affects of social media on them. They mention an article and add that there needs to be stricter regulations to protect young users.

[Rachel Hiskes LMSW/AICP/GSD:](#) supports this bill and gives firsthand experience of her 20+ years in social work. And mentions the highly addictive material featured in social media. She says that the bill must have language that prohibits use of algorithms to target those under sixteen and that social media websites must have parental permission before they register to those under sixteen as well.

[Elizabeth Martland:](#) supports this bill and says that they were born in 1992 and they mention this may be one of the last generations to grow up with little to no social media. They mention we need to let kids grow up and not rush it. They want their children to be raised without social media as well.

[Jennifer Pascale:](#) supports this bill and as a teacher urges for more oversight and parental review in social media use.

[Teacher, Kristen Turkosz:](#) supports this bill and urges that there needs to be safeholds in place to protect children from social media. They also add that children are often babysat by computer screens.

[Anonymous:](#) supports this bill and as a high school student urges that restricting social media access for minors under 16 would help reduce bullying and the harmful effects of unrealistic beauty standards promoted online.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Northeast-TechNet, Executive Director, Christopher Gilrein:](#) opposes this bill and states that the industry has a longstanding commitment o provide parents and guardians with information and tools to ensure a safe experience for children. They add that there is free content filters and solutions available to consumers. They end that attempts in other states have been ruled unconstitutional in courts.

[Chamber of Progress, Director of State& Local Government Relations, Northeast US, Brianna January:](#) Opposes this bill as they say this will compromise online privacy and hurt

LGBTQ+ youth the most. They add that consent laws can often cause more harm than protect and it can be a tool of control in abusive situations. They add this cover promote toxic posts by changing how the algorithm would run and that this could prevent overall age-appropriate design of online services.

Reported by: Christian Talarski

Date: 3/13/2025