

HB 1

**PROTECTING CHILDREN.
OUR FUTURE.**

“Florida’s social media legislation is the most important measure we can take to empower parents and save children from irreparable harm.

The case for bright line age limits on social media accounts is compelling. We will not allow social media companies to replace the role of parents. Freeing children from these platforms reestablishes the right of parents to raise their children as they see fit.

Social media causes unprecedented damage to our children's mental health. This is a global problem, but it cannot be the fate of our children.”

PAUL RENNER
SPEAKER, FLORIDA HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

HB 1 **SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR MINORS**

BY REP. SIROIS, REP. MCFARLAND, REP. RAYNER & SEN. GRALL

Florida Can Lead Where Others Failed.

The science is clear. Use of social media's addictive platforms results in negative body image issues, higher rates of depression, and suicidal and self-harm ideation – and they know it.

FLORIDIANS SUPPORT HB 1 Among Parents

69%
SUPPORT HB 1
(51% STRONGLY SUPPORT)

Bi-Partisan Support for HB 1

- **79%** Republicans
- **64%** Independents
- **57%** Democrats

90% of parents agree that kids spend too much time on social media

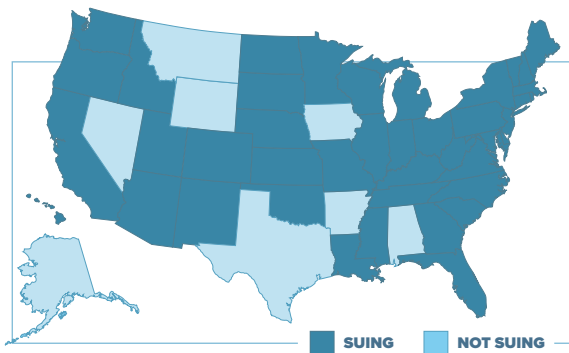
—CYGNAL POLLING OF FLORIDA VOTERS

Why Florida's HB 1 will succeed

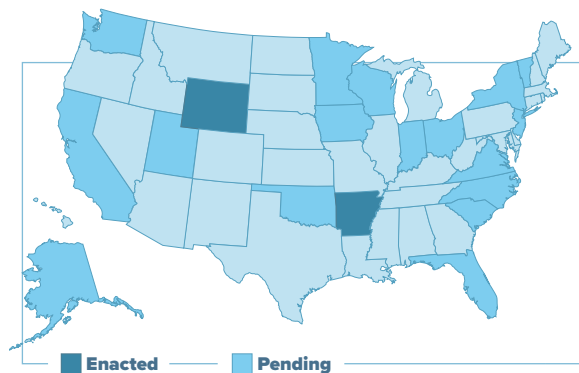
- ▶ **Targets addictive methods used by social media, not content.**
- ▶ **Includes all children under 16 years of age with no opt-in to eliminate FOMO and pressure on parents.**
- ▶ **Establishes enhanced anonymity provisions to protect user data.**

42 States currently suing META

for deliberately engineering its social media platforms Instagram and Facebook to be addictive to children and teens



States with legislation regarding the effects of social media



It's the Algorithms.

On one platform alone, test accounts were created for 13 year old users. Here's what the algorithm recommended:



within **2.6 minutes** suicide/self harm content
within **8 minutes** eating disorder content

—CENTER FOR COUNTERING DIGITAL HATE

Investigations have found that large networks of social media accounts, *purportedly operated by minors*, are openly advertising self generated child sexual abuse material for sale.

The platforms then analyze user behaviors and content consumption to *suggest related content and accounts to follow...and to connect buyers and sellers.*

—STANFORD POLICY CENTER

“Social media use can legitimately rewire the brains of children as young as 12 years old. Adolescents who engaged in habitual checking behaviors have a different brain development pattern in areas related to emotions, motivation, and cognitive control.”

—JAMA PEDIATRICS, JANUARY 3, 2023

What does HB 1 do?

HB 1 sets age verification requirements for social media platforms to protect children under 16. Only social media platforms that meet all four of the following conditions must use age verification:

1. has a significant number of children **under 16 using the platform for two hours or more a day** (which corresponds to mental health harms);
2. employs **addictive design features** like infinite scrolling and push notifications;
3. **uses an algorithm that gathers personal information about each child and delivers ever-changing content** to keep them on the platform as long as possible; and,
4. **allows account holders to upload content and view the activity of other users.**

▶ **If platforms remove the addictive design features and the personalized algorithm, children could once again access it.**

Damage Done

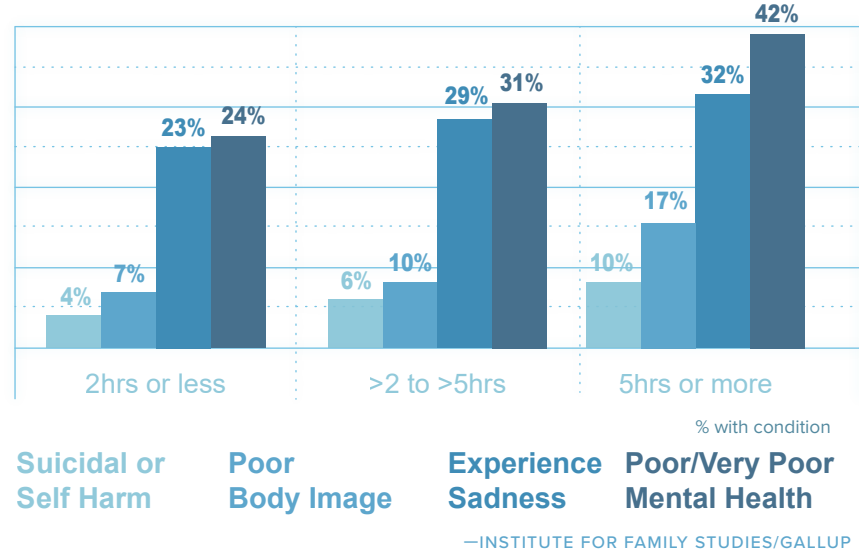


FLORIDA HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

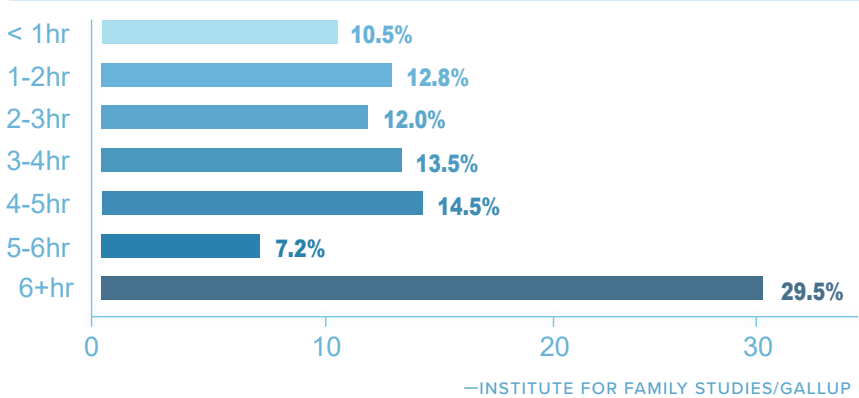
Majority of teens are on social media for a daily average of

4h 48m

Adolescent Mental Health Issues by Screen Time Use



Daily Social Media Usage Among U.S. Teens



17% of teen girls said that eating disorders worsened after using Instagram.

—MAYO CLINIC

32% of teen girls said that they felt bad about their bodies after using Instagram.

—MAYO CLINIC

NEARLY 2 in 3 adolescents are 'often' or 'sometimes' exposed to hate-based content on social media.

—THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

54% of teens say it would be difficult to give up social media.

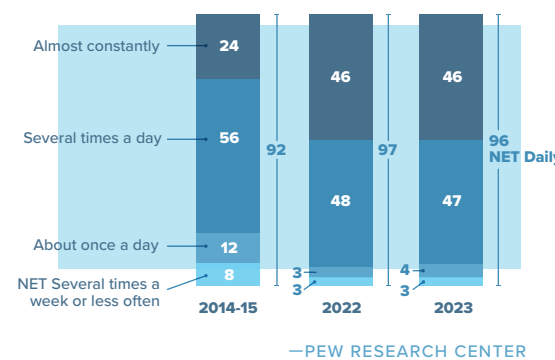
—PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Screen addiction keeps teens from family, friends, neighbors, and other community figures; it supplants team sports, exercise, good sleeping habits, life outdoors, and time for public service. Social media floods teens with dispiriting content that erodes their appreciation for their common inheritance and promotes the most toxic forms of social engagement with peers. The question for lawmakers is what must be done?"

—INSTITUTE FOR FAMILY STUDIES

The share of teens who say they are online 'almost constantly' has roughly doubled since 2014-2015

% of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 who say they use the internet



SOCIAL MEDIA CAN HARM KIDS FLORIDA MUST ACT TO BREAK ITS GRIP ON CHILDREN

Before drug manufacturers can sell prescription drugs, they must undergo stringent testing to ensure safety, including the risk of addiction. Shamefully, the architects of social media purposely designed their platforms to be addictive, like a drug. As a result, social media dominates our culture and permeates the lives of our children.

In the chilling documentary *The Social Dilemma*, social media's architects share regret about their role in its design and warn of its threats to society. They describe how the platforms deploy addictive algorithms and dopamine-releasing features like infinite scrolling and notifications to keep children hooked. Those addictive features lure children toward the platforms, endlessly seeking the next dopamine hit.

After what amounts to a decades-long social experiment, we know that social media use correlates with increasing mental health challenges among children. Children who use social media three hours a day are twice as likely to suffer depression. Overall, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 57% of high school girls experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in the previous year; 41% experienced poor mental health in the last 30 days, and nearly one out of every three girls seriously considered suicide the previous year. If you don't have time to read a study, just ask any parent of teenagers.

The Wall Street Journal's extensive investigations uncovered internal documents revealing that Meta knew, "We make body image issues worse for one in three teen girls...Teens told us they don't like the amount of time they spend on the app, but they feel they have to be present."

Despite acknowledging that their products were toxic to the mental health of young users, they ignored complaints and shut down criticism to maintain their profits.

Meta conceded that "[i]f we lose the teen foothold in the U.S., we lose the pipeline." In 2021 alone, they spent \$390 million recruiting 13 to 15-year-olds. Social media companies stand to earn hundreds of billions in profits if they get our children hooked early, knowing they will become lifetime users.

Since children's brains and judgment are not fully developed, parents and the public have agreed on setting minimum age requirements in a wide variety of areas: cigarettes, alcohol, gambling, driving, voting, working and marriage, among

others. Similarly, there is a compelling public interest in restricting access to social media platforms for children under 16. This session, we have proposed House Bill 1 as a necessary step to protect our children from the harms of these addictive platforms.

Unlike other states that focused on monitoring content, HB 1 narrowly prohibits access to those platforms that deploy addictive technology, which, in turn, harms children's emotional and mental health. If passed, the law would require these platforms to use a third-party, commercially reasonable, age-verification process. Third-party verifiers could not share any information outside the verification process and would be required to delete all information upon completion.

In Florida, we already see positive results from helping children reconnect to the world in front of them. Last year, we passed legislation that prevents K-12 students from using their cell phones during classroom time. Just six months since the bill's implementation, teachers and administrators say that students are more engaged, socializing and interacting with their peers, and disciplinary incidents are down.

Social media companies know that their platforms harm children. Nevertheless, their business model depends on monetizing those children, so we expect them to lobby and lawyer up to oppose our reforms. In the meantime, millions of American children will continue to suffer irreparable harm, losing their sense of purpose and self-worth.

HB1 will protect children, give them back their childhood, and prevent this from happening to another generation. It will be a fight, but it's a fight we intend to win.

—PAUL RENNER

SPEAKER, FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Miami Herald, January 22, 2024

Supporting Parents



FLORIDA HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

“As we’ve seen in numerous reports over the years — exposure to screen time and social media platforms has a direct correlation to mental health issues.

HB 1 is a step in the right direction in protecting our children from targeted social media.

As the country’s leading advocates in school safety — anything we can support that will help alleviate a constant strain on mental health will benefit future generations.”

—TONY MONTALTO
STAND WITH PARKLAND PRESIDENT

A Connection

Three of the most challenging issues teens face according to adults —AMERICAN FAMILY SURVEY

40% MENTAL HEALTH, INCLUDING THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE

39% OVERUSE OF TECHNOLOGY

29% BULLYING

“Florida has led the nation in promoting the primary right of moms and dads to determine who and what influences their children. On parental rights, we take a back seat to no one.” —PAUL RENNER
SPEAKER, FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Support for government regulations that require social media companies to enforce age restrictions

69% SUPPORT

24% NEITHER

8% OPPOSE

—AMERICAN FAMILY SURVEY

▶ At what age do [parents] think it is appropriate for a child to have an account on:

SNAPCHAT: 16 YRS. + **63%**

INSTAGRAM: 16 YRS. + **61%**

TIKTOK: 16 YRS. + **66%**

FACEBOOK: 16 YRS. + **57%**

—YOUNGOV 2023 SURVEY

Congress recently held a hearing on the negative effects of social media on children. In a dramatic moment, Meta’s Mark Zuckerberg was compelled to apologize to dozens of parents whose children took their own lives because of social media. Even with engaged parents, those children were unable to handle social media’s constant threats or break free from the addictive platforms.

Nevertheless, Zuckerberg denied any connection between platforms and the dramatic spike in depression, self-harm, and suicide among children. With grieving parents seated behind him, he brushed off the research and insisted that restricting children from accessing these addictive platforms constitutes an infringement of parents’ rights. But the complete opposite is true.

Florida’s social media legislation is the most important measure we can take to empower parents and save children from irreparable harm. The proposed legislation sets an age requirement for children under 16 to access social media platforms that meet all four of the following conditions:

- A significant number of children under 16 use the platform for two hours or more a day (which corresponds to mental health harms);
- The platform employs addictive design features;
- The platform uses an algorithm that gathers personal information about each child and delivers ever-changing content to keep them on the platform as long as possible; and
- The platform allows users to upload content and view the activity of other users.

If those platforms remove the addictive design features or the personalized algorithm, children could once again access the platforms.

Florida has led the nation in promoting the primary right of moms and dads to determine who and what influences their children. On parental rights, we take a back seat to no one.

Yet, everyone agrees that certain activities should be off limits for children. When it comes to drinking, smoking, or getting behind the wheel of a car, we have drawn bright line age restrictions to keep children safe. Common justifications for these regulations include: using addictive qualities or features, potentially significant physical and mental harm, hindering children’s brain development and practical challenges for parents to supervise the child’s activity 24/7. Any one of these justifications support age restrictions on social media platforms.

Social media was designed to be addictive. Design features

intended to deliver little hits of dopamine make us want to get on the platforms and stay on. Children are especially vulnerable and do not have the ability to self-regulate. Whether it’s smoking, drinking, or other potentially addictive activities, society routinely sets age limits.

Social media’s potential harm to children’s mental health and safety is significant. Studies have shown that the longer children spend on social media platforms the more likely they are to experience feelings of depression, self-harm, and even thoughts of suicide. While an adult could recognize this and step away, a child’s brain is still developing and can’t recognize the problem or solution as easily.

Our state’s sheriffs and prosecutors have endorsed our legislation. They detail how these platforms attract and empower pedophiles, enable criminal acts against children, such as human trafficking, and facilitate criminal activity by some juveniles against others.

A child’s brain is still developing. We don’t let children get behind the wheel of a car because they lack the judgment to make smart decisions on the road like speeding up or slowing down when the light turns yellow. In the same way, a child has less perception that their time spent on social media is proving addictive or harmful.

Social media companies have rendered parental oversight impractical. Big Tech and their allies are promoting the false promise of a parental opt-in, knowing once a child is on the platforms, parents are robbed of any real supervision. A parent can never realistically give consent without sitting and watching their child’s social media use in real time.

Think of the difference between algorithm-driven social media and more static forms of entertainment, like movies. Parents can preview a movie and decide whether it is appropriate. Social media platforms that use personalized algorithms do not give parents that same opportunity. These algorithms are dynamic and always changing, manipulating what a child views, constantly one step ahead of parents for the platform’s own ends.

The case for bright line age limits on social media accounts is compelling. We will not allow social media companies to replace the role of parents. Freeing children from these platforms reestablishes the right of parents to raise their children as they see fit.

—PAUL RENNER
SPEAKER, FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Orlando Sentinel, February 19, 2024

Views Change.

After leaders of social media admitted internal research showed platforms were harming children, reality and the need to act become obvious to all.

U.S. SENATE HEARING ON THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

JANUARY 26

JANUARY 31

FEBRUARY 01

“The government should not be the one who makes that decision.”

WHOOPI GOLDBERG



“We need better laws.”

“Social media is a problem, and as a parent, I’m concerned, but that is not the government’s [role].”

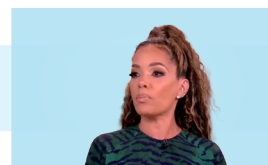
SARA HAINES



“I agree bills need to be passed. A lot of them are so reasonable: age verification, making sure they’re not marketing the algorithm to our young kids. These are very simple fixes.”

“[HB 1 is] actually kind of a good idea, but not in the way they’re implementing it. If you’re a parent, you already monitor your kids’ social media.”

SUNNY HOSTIN



“I don’t think people should be allowed to have social media accounts until they’re 18. You can’t vote until you’re 18. You can’t drink until you’re 21 ... Social media is such a danger to the mental health of our children ... I’m raising a teenager; it’s really hard to monitor them.”

“Why can’t they put it on a ballot like a proposition and ask the parents?”

JOY BEHAR



“It reminds me of the tobacco industry a little bit that also knew the harm that they were doing to people but didn’t say anything until they got called out.”

6 DAYS IS AS LITTLE AS IT TAKES



FLORIDA HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

HERE'S HOW FLORIDA IS PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM HARMFUL AND ADDICTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA

Everyone knows someone whose child has been hurt by social media. I've heard too many stories to count.

The daughter of one friend became suicidal because of what she experienced on a popular platform. The daughters of two different friends cut themselves after spending too much time on social media.

So many parents have watched their daughters and sons spiral downward while racking up more posts and likes.

As parents of two young children, my wife and I are already worried about what will happen if they're exposed to social media. It's no exaggeration to say we're afraid for their futures – and even their lives.

It's time to keep children safe. That's why Florida is moving to protect kids from the most harmful and addictive social media platforms.

This week, the Florida House and Senate will overwhelmingly pass bipartisan legislation to that effect. We are narrowly targeting social media platforms that promote addiction, while ensuring that children can still access the countless educational, entertainment, and productive tools found online.

Kids deserve the many opportunities that the internet has to offer. They also deserve protection from the worst the internet has to offer.

Under our legislation, children who are younger than 16 years old cannot create accounts on social media platforms that target them in concerning ways. That includes the use of individualized algorithms, which are designed to keep kids glued to the screen as long as possible, as well as deliberately addictive features like infinite scrolling and video auto-play.

The bill is also limited to platforms on which at least 10% of young users spend two or more hours a day – a threshold that studies show threatens kids' mental health. Many kids spend far more time on social media, and when teens reach three hours a day, they're twice as likely to struggle with depression.

The kids who are already struggling with mental health challenges get hurt the most. Algorithms and addictive features feed them an endless supply of content on the very things they should avoid, from self-harm to suicide.

Young girls are especially vulnerable, and as social media has taken off, their well-being has plummeted. We live in a time when 57% of high-school girls report persistent hopelessness or loneliness and 41% report monthly mental-health challenges.

Worst of all, a stunning 30% of high-school girls have contemplated suicide in the last year. This is a crisis – a crisis that's made worse by harmful social media.

Social media didn't have to take this road, and under our legislation, kids will still be allowed on platforms that do the right thing. They simply have to get rid of the kid-targeting algorithms and addictive features.

The companies may say that's not in their financial interest, but protecting the mental development of children is far more important than the corporate bottom line. Cigarette companies, brewers, distillers, and strip clubs would also make more money if they could target kids. But that's illegal, as it should be.

Some have asked me why we don't leave these decisions in parents' hands. My response is simple: We're strengthening parental rights.

Social media companies have designed their algorithms and features to outsmart children and parents alike. A child's primary influence should be his or her parent, not an algorithm designed by strangers, and similar laws are designed to support parents in the difficult work of raising kids.

When the law bans children from drinking alcohol, it gives parents more room to help them develop and find a path to a fulfilling life. Protecting kids from harmful social media is exactly the same.

The past two decades have been one big experiment on how social media affects America's children. The results are in – and they're awful to behold.

Companies are deliberately getting kids addicted to something that hurts them in profound ways. More children are suffering than ever before, pushed into depression, self-harm, and even taking their lives.

Florida will no longer let this experiment continue. Our children are too important to sacrifice to social media gone wrong.

—PAUL RENNER

SPEAKER, FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FoxNews.com, February 22, 2024

In the News



FLORIDA HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

HERE'S WHY WE SPONSORED THE FLORIDA BILL TO BAN MOST SOCIAL MEDIA FOR KIDS UNDER 16

Studies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Federation of Teachers, Pew Research, and the U.S. Surgeon General have warned us that social media use among young people is linked to increased anxiety, clinical depression, negative body image perception, and even increased thoughts of suicide. The addictive features of these platforms, like infinite scrolling and push notifications, are designed to keep people compulsively focused, so the platforms can act like a drug to children's still-developing brains.

Internal documents from social media companies have revealed that they know about the harmful effects on our kids, yet to keep making more profits, they continue to keep kids addicted. Social media platforms target kids similarly to how Big Tobacco did with their harmful, addictive products. And our kids deserve similar legal protections. That is why we have sponsored House Bill 1: to protect Florida's youth by banning these addictive social media platforms for children under the age of 16.

Everyone agrees that children should not be permitted to join a gambling website or purchase alcohol. It should be no different when people go on addictive social media platforms. It should be no different than going on a gambling website that requires age verification, walking onto a casino floor, walking into a liquor store, purchasing tobacco or getting a marriage license, all of which require ID.

Study after study has demonstrated the clear harm these sites pose to our young people. When it comes to areas that threaten the development of our children, like tobacco, alcohol, driving a motor vehicle, playing a slot machine, or even entering into a contract for marriage, not only does Florida have a compelling state interest in taking a stand, but it must protect our children.

Social media companies that employ the addictive, harmful or deceptive features defined in our legislation must be compelled to put our children first by mandating adoption of age verification processes that are managed by an independent, nongovernmental third party that verifies the age of all prospective account holders. This process also protects account holders' private information by mandating that any documentation that may be received during the verification be deleted. These modern age-verification systems will allow

users to remain anonymous, while still providing reliable age verification.

Unlike laws in other states regulating social media, our legislation is narrowly crafted to withstand the inevitable court challenges these companies will bring forward. Meanwhile, platforms that don't employ addictive, harmful or deceptive features like infinite scrolling, push notifications, and auto-play are not affected by this legislation.

For us, it is not about restricting access to the internet at large, it is about protecting our children from the harms of social media. For the social media companies, this fight isn't about protecting your First Amendment rights or preserving the role of the parent, it's about one thing: money.

Don't take our word for it. Internal documents show these companies have acknowledged "if we lose the teen foothold in the U.S., we lose the pipeline," which is why, in 2021 alone, just one company spent \$390 million recruiting 13- to 15-year-olds.

The Florida House passed House Bill 1 with overwhelming bipartisan support. This is not a "red" issue or a "blue" issue. In Florida, we have a duty to protect our kids, and this is a fight we intend to win.

—**TYLER SIROIS**
REPRESENTATIVE, FLORIDA HOUSE
HB 1 Bill Sponsor

—**MICHELE RAYNER**
REPRESENTATIVE, FLORIDA HOUSE
HB 1 Bill Sponsor

Tampa Bay Times, February 9, 2024



SPEAKER
PAUL RENNER

"We must address the harmful effects social media platforms have on the development and well-being of our kids. Florida has a compelling state interest and duty to protect our children, their mental health, and their childhood. I'm grateful to the members of this body for their decisive action to fight for our kids and their ability to thrive."



REPRESENTATIVE
TYLER SIROIS

"You don't have to be a parent of a young person to understand the addictive nature of social media platforms. Even our children know social media is harming them, but due to addiction and peer pressure, they are unable to step away."



REPRESENTATIVE
MICHELE RAYNER

"This is a generational bill that will save lives. In this moment, the state of Florida is taking a bipartisan stand and saying that we will not allow social media companies to build their businesses on the backs of our children. We have no choice but to act."



SENATOR GRALL
SENATOR ERIN GRALL

"This isn't about parental rights, because we don't allow parents to harm their children. This bill goes a long way to be as narrowly tailored as possible to make it through that constitutional analysis."



REPRESENTATIVE
FIONA McFARLAND

"Social media platforms are addictive by design. Combine that with intense social pressures, bullying, and harassment, and it's no wonder our kids' mental health is declining. This bill puts an end to that, because social media companies have not."



ATTORNEY GENERAL
ASHLEY MOODY

"Our children are being exposed to inappropriate material. They're being addicted online. We have to do something to stand up for our kids. I'm proud of the state of Florida who is exploring ways to do that."

Their Words. Our Children.

Things social media companies know ... but don't want the public to know.

VIA THEIR OWN DOCUMENTS AND STUDIES:

- They make body image issues worse for 1 in 3 teen girls.
- If they “lose the teen foothold in the U.S., [they] lose the pipeline.”
- Their algorithms could be amplifying negative social comparisons.
- Social comparisons are valuable to their business models while simultaneously causing harm to teen girls.
- Content inciting negative appearance comparisons is some of the most engaging content.
- Recommendation algorithms trigger intermittent dopamine releases in young users.
- They optimize for “retention” and “time spent”...they want users on as long as possible.
- Platform algorithms are built to quickly detect users musical taste, physical attractions, emotional state, potential drug interest, and more.
- Some of the largest platforms have NO idea where all user data goes, or what they are doing with it.

“My heart is completely shattered ... I post this now only so that not one more kid dies. We watched him so closely. Straight A student. Getting ready for college. Experimentation gone bad. He got the drugs delivered to the house.”

— **THERAPIST DR. LAURA BERMAN**, mother of 16 year old Samuel who died after he bought illicit drugs on Snapchat

“This is not going to stop, and more kids are gonna die and more kids are gonna get hurt ... The longer this takes, the worse it's going to be. The numbers are going to keep growing because this is an ongoing problem.”

— **NEVEEN RADWAN**, mother of 16 year old Mariam who died from severe anorexia after watching pro-eating disorder content on TikTok and Facebook

“It was a hard thing because I found these videos on Snapchat shortly after he had passed away.”

— **JENNIFER MITCHELL**, mother of 16 year old Ian who shot himself after watching Snapchat videos

“I had no idea that it could get to that. I would have never let her have it in the beginning. These are all things that are all hidden in the background. That, you know, it seems like these big tech companies, they know exactly how to make it work for them. And the parents don't know what's going on.”

— **TAMMY RODRIGUEZ**, mother of 11 year old Selena who died by suicide after an extreme social media addiction led to sexual exploitation by online predators on Snapchat and Instagram

