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July 25, 2023

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chairwoman, Senate Commerce Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Ranking Member, Senate Commerce
Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz,

We are writing to express our strong support of the bipartisan Children and Teens' Online Privacy Protection Act (S. 1418), known as COPPA 2.0, ahead of its markup in the Senate Commerce Committee this week. America's children and families have waited too long already for stronger data privacy protections and every day of delay in enacting needed guardrails for kids online is another day of serious harm to them and their families.

As you know, COPPA 2.0 passed out of the Commerce Committee in 2022 and was recently reintroduced. The current amended bill text reflects revisions to address concerns from a wide range of stakeholders and both the Committee majority and minority. In addition, the bill has received widespread support. In June, more than 60 organizations signed onto our [coalition letter](#) urging this Committee to quickly mark up the bill.

COPPA 2.0 makes needed changes to the now 25-year-old law to protect the privacy of kids and teens on the internet as it looks today. The bill presents you with a significant opportunity to stand up for children and families who are experiencing serious harms from the way their online data is collected and used by private companies. The bill would cut off access to the troves of data that companies hold on children and teens and that they use to target and manipulate them, for profit, often to the detriment of their mental health and well-being.

It is now well-documented that our nation's youth are suffering from a mental health crisis. The research is startling. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently found that in 2021, [1 in 10 high school girls](#) contemplated suicide. In addition, [42 percent of high school students](#) experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness. While there are a number of factors behind this mental health crisis, it has become abundantly clear that young people's interactions with online technology is one significant contributor.

We strongly support other legislation before the committee to hold social media platforms accountable, particularly the Kids Online Safety Act (S. 1409), which would require companies to design their online



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platforms with young people's health and well-being in mind, but we want to stress the importance of also passing stronger data privacy protections for minors. Enactment of strong privacy protections is an essential step, perhaps the most important step, toward making the internet healthier and safer for young users. Tech companies' data practices play a significant role in how online platforms negatively impact youth mental health and well-being. Online platforms have become so powerful because of the troves of data they amass on kids and teens. Companies then use this data to serve up algorithmic recommendations, which amplify harmful content, including posts promoting eating disorders, self-harm, and dangerous physical challenges. For example, when a teenager follows one account on healthy eating, the algorithm can drag that teen down a rabbit hole of recommendations that quickly escalates into content teaching girls how to lose weight fast and engage in disordered eating. However, without all this data, companies would not be able to target young individuals with such extreme precision, which keeps them glued to their screens and continually engaging with the platform.

Harms to children and youth online are undeniable, and the 117th Congress devoted considerable time, thought, and energy to this issue. It would be irresponsible now for Congress to go another year without taking concrete action to protect kids online. The longer Congress waits to enact needed guardrails for kids online leads to ever greater harms to them and their families. It is time to secure a major win for our kids and their families and we strongly urge you to approve the bipartisan COPPA 2.0 in Committee this week.

Thank you again for your focus on online harms to kids and teens and for your ongoing attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Psychological Association

Center for Digital Democracy

Common Sense Media

Eating Disorders Coalition

Fairplay

Mental Health America