



U.S. Senate Commerce Committee Passes the Kids Online Safety Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. (July 27, 2023)- Today, the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation unanimously passed the bipartisan *Kids Online Safety Act* ([S.1409](#)). The bill now awaits a vote on the U.S. Senate floor. The legislation is championed by Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), along with 41 U.S. Senators. The legislation seeks to hold social media companies accountable after their repeated failures to protect children and adolescents from the practices that make their platforms harmful.

After numerous hearings and abundant research findings, the evidence is clear of the potential harms social media platforms can have on the [brain development](#) and mental health of the nation's youth, including anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and suicidal behaviors.

The lack of transparency into the inner workings, policies, and impacts of these platforms must be addressed now as the very real harms of social media are impacting children and adolescents today. The U.S. Congress has the power to hold these companies accountable through passage of the legislation and today marks a significant step forward in this fight.

“Federal regulation of social media is woefully out of date, allowing platforms to put the mental health of millions of children at risk as a result of companies’ insatiable demand to increase their advertising dollars,” **said Dr. S. Bryn Austin, Board Member of the Eating Disorders Coalition and Director of the Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders.** “We have witnessed eating disorders double since the start of the pandemic and teen mental health reach a crisis point. Parents and families can’t fight these companies alone, and they shouldn’t have to. Today’s vote in favor of the Kids Online Safety Act with strong bipartisan support is the clearest sign yet that Congress is ready to stand up to Big Tech and make meaningful protections for children the law of the land.”

“The Kids Online Safety Act is crucial to the physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing of our youth,” **said Julia Hark, Young Adult Council Member of the Eating Disorders Coalition.** “Like so many others, I spent years battling an eating disorder in my mind and my body only to then be harmed again and again online by harmful content that led to an increase in harmful behaviors and thoughts. I am proud to be part of an organization that spent countless hours and energy working to pass this bill, making sure to especially protect our queer and trans youth, who face eating disorders and receive harmful online content disproportionately. We still have a lot of work to do to create safe online communities that translate to positive mindsets in our youth, but this is the first, very important step.”

“We are thrilled that the Kids Online Safety Act is advancing to the Senate floor, but until this bill passes, our children will continue to be harmed online,” **said Senator Marsha Blackburn (R-**

TN). "No amount of lies or lobbying from big tech companies and special interests will stop us or the countless parents and advocates fighting to protect our kids."

"As I sat in today's Commerce Committee markup it was clear that Congress is ready to take action to protect kids online," **said Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)**. "I am thrilled that the Kids Online Safety Act passed unanimously out of committee and is headed to the Senate floor. We are one step closer to giving young people and parents the tools to take back their online lives, but we are not over the finish line. As we work on final passage the countless parents and young advocates sharing their stories will continue to serve as a powerful source of purpose and inspiration."

"We commend Chair Cantwell (D-WA), Ranking Member Cruz (R-TX), and the Commerce Committee for advancing the Kids Online Safety Act, a critical step towards creating the internet young people deserve," **said Josh Golin, Executive Director, Fairplay**. "For far too long, unregulated social media companies have reaped enormous profits at the expense of our children's wellbeing and safety. By creating a duty of care, the Kids Online Safety Act will force companies to change the manipulative design choices that lead to serious and preventable harm to children every day. We look forward to working with members of both parties and both chambers in the fall to see this critical legislation to the finish line."

"After losing my 15-year-old son, Mason, to a social media harm, it is very promising that the Kids Online Safety Act passed through the Senate Commerce Committee," **said Joann Bogard, Indiana resident and parent survivor**. "This bill will provide parents with the tools needed to better protect their children online."

"We are grateful to leaders and members of the Senate Commerce Committee for moving the Kids Online Safety Act forward," **said Mary Giliberti, Chief Public Policy Officer of Mental Health America**. "Our online screening data shows that teens are struggling with body image, suicidal ideation, anxiety, and depression. The youth mental health crisis requires Congress to take a comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying causes of distress."

"The American Psychological Association has provided Congress with psychological research demonstrating the impact of social media on children and adolescents," **said Arthur C. Evans Jr., PhD, American Psychological Association**. "The Kids Online Safety Act takes important steps toward curtailing the harm posed to youth by social media use and content, while seeking to retain the benefits. The legislation also creates important new access for psychological researchers to data held by social media companies that is essential to further understanding the platforms' impact on children."

For additional information on the bill and research findings, please refer to EDC's previous [press release](#). Additionally, you can [read the letter of support](#) sent to Senate leadership from over 200 national, state, and local organizations urging the swift passage of the legislation.

The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) is a Washington, DC-based, federal advocacy organization comprised of advocacy organizations, academics, treatment providers, family/loved ones of children with eating disorders, and people experiencing

eating disorders nationwide. The EDC advances the recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority throughout the United States. Additional resources can also be found at eatingdisorderscoalition.org.

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