

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: CS/CS/HB 591 Social Media Protection for Minors

SPONSOR(S): Choice & Innovation Subcommittee, Regulatory Reform & Economic Development Subcommittee, Rayner-Goolsby and others

TIED BILLS: None. **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 792

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Regulatory Reform & Economic Development Subcommittee	13 Y, 0 N, As CS	Wright	Anstead
2) Choice & Innovation Subcommittee	14 Y, 0 N, As CS	McDaniel	Sleep
3) Commerce Committee			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Social media platforms are a computer-based technology that facilitate the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through virtual communities to allow electronic communication of content. Social media use by children can have positive and negative influences, and providing them with information and external controls can help prevent harmful effects.

The bill defines “social media platform” as a digital platform operating in the state mainly accessed by children under the age of 18 that offers forms of electronic communication through which users are permitted to create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.

Beginning January 1, 2024, the bill requires social media platforms to:

- Disclose policies, using clear language suited to children, related to:
 - Content moderation.
 - Addictive design or deceptive pattern features, including autoplay or infinite scroll.
 - Manipulated photographs or digital images.
 - Consideration of best interests of minors when designing, developing, and providing services.
 - Protections against harmful behaviors, such as bullying and threats of violence.
 - Collection or sale of personal information of children, including biometrics and geolocation data.
- Provide clear access to the following:
 - Resources for law enforcement, suicide prevention, and domestic violence prevention services.
 - Protective measures such as screen time limitations and other parental settings.
 - Reporting mechanisms related to harmful behaviors, such as bullying and threats of violence.
- Require children to read and accept a disclaimer on the potential harms of using social media at log in.

The bill requires the above operating requirements to be on the social media platform’s Internet homepage, platform user login page, or in a clearly labeled, conspicuous, and readily accessible link contained on such page.

The bill allows social media platforms to post a statement on their website confirming that it has complied with the operating requirements. If a social media platform does not have such a statement on their website, then all K-12 schools operating in the state that accept state funding may not use or have an account on such social media platform.

The bill prohibits a public K-12 school from requiring students to participate in social media platforms related to school-sponsored educational activities. Schools may still require student use of portal, email, and message board accounts used for official business with the school.

The bill will have no fiscal impact on state or local governments.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2023.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Current Situation

Social Media Platforms

Generally, a social media platform is a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through virtual networks and communities. Social media is Internet-based and gives users quick electronic communication of content, such as personal information, videos, and photos. Users engage with social media via a computer, tablet, or smartphone via web-based software or applications.¹

Effects of Social Media on Children

Generally, social media use by children can have both positive and negative effects on their health.² Some potential safety risks of social media use include:³

- Exposure to harmful or inappropriate content.
- Exposure to dangerous people.
- Cyberbullying.
- Oversharing personal information.
- Exposure to excessive advertisements.
- Privacy concerns, including the collection of data about minors.
- Identity theft or being hacked.
- Interference with sleep, exercise, homework, or family activities.

While children generally become more attuned to social interactions as they enter adolescence, those who are frequent, early social media users become particularly sensitive to anticipating social risks and rewards from their peers, according to a study published in JAMA Pediatrics.⁴

The researchers found that “habitual” social media users, or those who checked their social feeds 15 times a day or more, responded quicker and more intensely to perceived good or bad emotions from peers, compared to students who checked once a day or less. The areas of the brain associated with motivation and cognitive control became more active among the habitual students when expecting social rewards and punishments. The students who used little social media reacted less strongly to social cues over the same time period.⁵

Another study in the Journal of Adolescent Health found that 9- and 10-year-olds who spent hours a day playing video games or watching online algorithm-based videos had a higher risk of developing obsessive-compulsive disorders.⁶

¹ Maya Dollarhide, *Social Media: Definition, Effects, and List of Top Apps*, Investopedia.com, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-media.asp> (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

² Mayo Clinic Staff, *Teens and social media use: What's the impact?*, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/tween-and-teen-health/in-depth/teens-and-social-media-use/art-20474437> (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

³ Loyola Medicine, *Social Media Safety for Kids and Teens*, <https://www.loyolamedicine.org/about-us/blog/social-media-safety-kids-teens>, (last visited Mar. 22, 2023)

⁴ Sarah D. Sparks, *“Preteens” Social Media Habits Could Be Changing Their Brains*, Education Week, Jan. 6, 2023, <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/preteens-social-media-habits-could-be-changing-their-brains/2023/01> (last visited Mar. 22, 2023); Maria T. Maza, BS; Kara A. Fox, MA; Seh-Joo Kwon, BS; et al, *Association of Habitual Checking Behaviors on Social Media With Longitudinal Functional Brain Development*, JAMA Pediatrics, Jan. 3, 2023, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/article-abstract/2799812> (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

⁵ Maria T. Maza, *supra* note 4.

⁶ *Id*; Jason M. Nagata, M.D., M.Sc.; Jonathan Chu; Gabriel Zamora; Caitlin R. Costello, M.D.; Stuart B. Murray, D.Clin.Psych., Ph.D.; Fiona C. Baker, Ph.D.; *Screen Time and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Among Children 9–10 Years Old: A Prospective Cohort*

In 2021, the Wall Street Journal reported internal research showing that Instagram conducted online surveys, diary studies, focus groups and large-scale questionnaires, which showed that 32% of teenage girls reported that Instagram made them have a worse body image. Of research participants who experienced suicidal thoughts, 13% of British teens and 6% of American teens directly linked their interest in suicide to Instagram.⁷

Recently, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy remarked that 13 years old is “too early” for children to use social media, despite most social media companies allowing 13 year olds to use their platforms. In early adolescence, kids are still “developing their identity, their sense of self,” Murthy said on CNN’s “Newsroom” on Jan. 29. He stated that “the skewed, and often distorted, environment of social media often does a disservice to many of those children.”⁸

However, social media can allow teens to create online identities, communicate with others, and build social networks, which can provide teens with valuable support, especially helping those who experience exclusion. Social media can expose teens to current events, allow them to interact across geographic barriers, and teach them about a variety of subjects, including healthy behaviors. Also, social media that is humorous or provides a meaningful connection to peers may help teens avoid depression.⁹

In 2022, the Pew Research Center conducted a survey asking teens of their views on social media. Generally, they credit social media for helping to build stronger friendships and exposing them to a more diverse world, but they express concern that these sites lead to drama and social pressure.¹⁰

Safety Measures and Parental Controls

Providing children with information on ways to more safely use social media may decrease the harm they experience. Having conversations about social media, its benefits, and its risks, may help promote positive social media usage.¹¹

Also, parental controls can help protect children from inappropriate content, cyberbullying and other online safety issues. Generally, parental controls are a group of settings that put a parent in control of what content a child can see.¹² Many websites, games, software, devices, and user interfaces offer the optional use of parental controls. Examples of parental controls include blocking websites, filtering content, imposing limits on screen time, allowing parents to monitor online activity, location tracking, and disabling Wi-Fi.¹³

Study; Journal of Adolescent Health, Dec. 12, 2022; [https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(22\)00722-4/fulltext](https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(22)00722-4/fulltext) (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

⁷ Taylor Hatmaker, *Facebook knows Instagram harms teens. Now, its plan to open the app to kids looks worse than ever*, TechCrunch.com, <https://techcrunch.com/2021/09/16/facebook-instagram-for-kids-mosseri-wsj-teen-girls/> (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

⁸ Lauraine Langreo, EducationWeek, *Surgeon General: Kids Under 14 Should Not Use Social Media*, Feb. 2, 2023, <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/surgeon-general-kids-under-14-should-not-use-social-media/2023/02> (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

⁹ Mayo Clinic, *supra* note 2.

¹⁰ Pew Research Center, *Teens’ Social Media Habits and Experiences*, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/11/28/teens-social-media-habits-and-experiences/>, (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

¹¹ WebMD Editorial Contributors, *How to Talk to Your Kids About Social Media*, WebMD.com, <https://www.webmd.com/parenting/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-social-media> (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

¹² Internetmatters.org, *Parental Controls*, <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/> (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

¹³ Caroline Knorr, Commonsensemedia.org, *Parents’ Ultimate Guide to Parental Controls*, <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/articles/parents-ultimate-guide-to-parental-controls> (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

Laws Protecting Children Online

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)¹⁴ and its related rules, is a federal law that regulates websites' collection and use of children's information. The operator of a website or online service that is directed to children, or that has actual knowledge that it collects children's personal information (covered entities), must comply with requirements regarding data collection and use, privacy policy notifications, and data security.

A covered entity may not collect personal information from a child under the age of 13 without the prior, verifiable consent of his or her parent.¹⁵

COPPA requires covered entities to:¹⁶

- Give parents direct notice of their privacy policies, including a description of their data collection and sharing practices;
- Post a clear link to their privacy policies on their home page and at each area of their website where they collect personal information from children;
- Institute procedures to protect the personal information that they hold;
- Ensure that any third party with which they share collected personal information implements the same protection procedures; and
- Delete children's personal information after the purpose for its retention has been fulfilled.

Violations of COPPA are deemed an unfair or deceptive act or practice and may therefore be prosecuted by the FTC. COPPA also authorizes state attorneys general to enforce violations that affect residents of their states. There is no criminal prosecution or private right of action provided for under COPPA.¹⁷

California Age-Appropriate Design Code Act

In 2022, California adopted the California Age-Appropriate Design Code Act (CAADCA),¹⁸ legislation modelled on the United Kingdom's Age Appropriate Design Code,¹⁹ which requires online platforms to adhere to strict default privacy and safety settings that protect the best interest of children.²⁰ CAADCA covers children under 18 years of age and will be effective July 1, 2024.²¹

CAADCA requires certain businesses that provide an online service, product, or feature that is likely to be accessed by children to comply with several new requirements and restrictions, including:²²

- Prohibitions on using any personal information that it knows or should know is materially detrimental to a child's physical or mental health and/or wellbeing; and
- Prohibitions on obscuring user interface features to deliberately defeat consent or manipulate children into providing unnecessary personal information, otherwise called "dark patterns."

Such businesses must complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment for any new feature they wish to offer to the public if it is likely to be accessed by children, which will determine if any dark patterns are

¹⁴ 16 C.F.R. pt. 312.

¹⁵ 15 U.S.C. ss. 6502(a)-(b).

¹⁶ See, Federal Trade Commission, *General Questions About the COPPA Rule: What is the Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule?*, <https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/complying-coppa-frequently-asked-questions-0> (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Cal. Civil Code § 1798.99.28-.35

¹⁹ 5Rights Foundation, *California follows UK lead as child data protection law is passed*, <https://5rightsfoundation.com/in-action/california-follows-uk-lead-as-child-data-protection-law-is-passed.html> (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

²⁰ Office of Governor Gavin Newsome, *Governor Newsom Signs First-in-Nation Bill Protecting Children's Online Data and Privacy*, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2022/09/15/governor-newsom-signs-first-in-nation-bill-protecting-childrens-online-data-and-privacy/> (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

²¹ Cal. Civil Code § 1798.99.28-.35

²² Briana Kelly, Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP, *State of California Passes Bill to Protect Children Online*, Jan. 26, 2023, https://www.nelsonmullins.com/idea_exchange/alerts/privacy_and_data_security_alert/all/state-of-california-passes-bill-to-protect-children-online (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

employed, if there is an asymmetrical reward, or if targeted advertisements are deployed in a way that could harm or exploit children.²³

Required Instruction in Florida Schools

Under Florida's Constitution, unless otherwise voted upon by electors, each county constitutes a school district.²⁴ In Florida, there are 67 school districts to match the 67 counties in the state.²⁵ The Florida Constitution further states that each school district must have a school board composed of five or more members.²⁶ The school boards operate, control, and supervise all free public schools within the school district and determine the rate of school district taxes within constitutional limits.²⁷ The powers and duties of the district school board are further set forth in law.²⁸

The law requires each district school board to provide all courses required for middle grades promotion, high school graduation, and appropriate instruction designed to ensure that students meet State Board of Education adopted standards²⁹ in the following subject areas:

- reading and other language arts;
- mathematics;
- science;
- social studies;
- foreign languages;
- health and physical education; and
- the arts.³⁰

In addition, the law identifies specific topics a teacher must teach.³¹ One such topic is comprehensive age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate K-12 instruction on health education that addresses concepts of community health, consumer health, environmental health, and family life, including:

- injury prevention and safety;
- Internet safety;
- nutrition;
- personal health;
- prevention and control of disease;
- substance use and abuse; and
- prevention of child sexual abuse, exploitation, and human trafficking.³²

Teachers must teach the topics specified in law efficiently and faithfully, using books and materials meeting the highest standards for professionalism and historical accuracy, following the prescribed courses of study, and employing approved methods of instruction.³³ Unless otherwise specified, the law generally does not prescribe grade level, instructional hours, or instructional materials requirements for these topics.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Art. IX, s. 4(a), Fla. Const.; s. 1001.30, F.S. Two or more contiguous counties, upon vote of the electors of each county pursuant to law, may be combined into one school district.

²⁵ Florida Department of Education, *Public Schools/Districts*, https://web03.fldoe.org/Schools/schoolmap_text.asp (last visited Feb. 20, 2023). The Florida School for the Deaf and Blind, the Florida Virtual School, and the university laboratory schools are considered independent school districts but their governing boards are not elected.

²⁶ Art. IX, s. 4(a), Fla. Const.

²⁷ Art. IX, s. 4(b), Fla. Const.

²⁸ Sections 1001.41 and 1001.42, F.S.

²⁹ In 2020, the State Board of Education adopted new standards for English language arts and mathematics, called the Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.) Standards. The English language arts standards implementation began with the 2021 -2022 school year and implementation of the math standards began in the 2022 -2023 school year. Rule 6A-1.09401, F.A.C.

³⁰ Section 1003.42(1)(a), F.S.

³¹ Section 1003.42(2)(a)-(t), F.S.

³² Section 1003.42(2)(n)1.a.-g., F.S.

³³ Section 1003.42(2), F.S.

While not required, an elective course on social media³⁴ is available in CPALMS.³⁵ A school may offer this social media course to enable students in grades 9 through 12 to develop fundamental skills in the use of social media across print, multimedia, web, and broadcast platforms, including ethical and legal uses. The content of the elective course should include, but not be limited to, the following:³⁶

- Demonstrating entry-level skills in digital communication and packaging them across the platforms/mediums of print, multimedia, online, and broadcast;
- Demonstrating fundamental skills in social media platforms and their uses; expressing social connections with maturity and complexity appropriate to writer, audience, purpose, and context;
- Using fundamental research skills and networking formats;
- Collaborating amongst peers; and
- Using effective listening, speaking, and viewing strategies with an emphasis on the use of evidence to support or refute a claim in multimedia presentations, class discussions, and extended text discussions.

Effect of the Bill

The bill defines “social media platform” or “platform” to mean a digital platform operating in the state predominantly accessed by platform users who are under the age of 18 that offers forms of electronic communication through which such platform users are permitted to create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.

Beginning January 1, 2024, the bill requires social media platforms to:

- Disclose the following social media platform policies, in a manner that is clearly, concisely, prominently, and understandably written, using clear language suited to the age of users likely to routinely access the platform without unrelated, confusing, or contradictory materials:
 - The content moderation policies used by the social media platform for content on the platform.
 - Whether the social media platform uses or allows the use of addictive design or deceptive pattern features including autoplay or infinite scroll.
 - Whether the social media platform allows manipulated photographs or digital images to be shared on the platform.
 - Whether the social media platform considers the best interests of minors when designing, developing, and providing services.
 - The methodology the social media platform uses to consider the best interests of minors when designing, developing, and providing services.
 - The policies and protections used by the social media platform to protect against harmful behaviors, such as bullying, harassment, and threats of violence or self-harm.
 - Whether the platform collects or sells personal information of platform users who are under the age of 18, including personal identifiers, biometrics, and geolocation data. If such personal information is collected, the platform must disclose the type of personal information is collected and the purpose for such, and if such personal information is sold, the platform must disclose to whom the information is sold.
- Provide clear access to the following:
 - Zip code-based references to local resources for law enforcement, suicide prevention, and domestic violence prevention services.
 - Protective measures such as screen time limitations, data usage limitations, content filters, and other parental settings.
 - Reporting mechanisms related to harmful behaviors, such as bullying, harassment, and threats of violence or self-harm

³⁴ CPALMS, Course, *Social Media 1 (#1006375)*, <https://www.cpalms.org/PreviewCourse/Preview/17758>, (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

³⁵ CPALMS is the State of Florida’s official source for standards information and course descriptions. It provides access to the usands of standards-aligned, free, and high-quality instructional/educational resources that have been developed specifically for the standards and vetted through a rigorous review process. CPALMS, *About CPALMS*, http://www.cpalms.org/CPALMS/about_us.aspx, (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

³⁶ *Id.*

The bill requires the above operating requirements to be on the social media platform's Internet homepage or platform user login page or through a clearly labeled, conspicuous, and readily accessible link contained on such page.

The bill requires, at the time of log in, and before obtaining access to the platform, a social media platform to require platform users who are under the age of 18 to read and accept a disclaimer which must be in substantially the following form:

This application may be harmful to your mental health and may use design features that have addictive qualities or present unverified information, or that may be manipulated by [insert platform name] or others for your viewing. This application may also collect your personal data to further manipulate your viewable content and may share your personal data with others.

The bill prohibits a public K-12 school from:

- Using or having an account on a social media platform that does not have a compliance statement on its Internet homepage or platform user login page.
- Requiring students, regardless of age, to register, enroll, or participate in a social media platform as a means to access information, materials, or resources related to school-sponsored educational activities. Schools may still require student use of portal, email, and message board accounts used for official business with the school.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2023.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Creates s. 501.174, F.S.; providing a definition; requiring social media platforms to disclose specified policies and provide specified resources, measures, and disclaimers; authorizing social media platforms to post specified compliance statements on their Internet homepage or platform user login page; prohibiting certain schools from using or having an account on certain social media platforms and from requiring students to register, enroll, or participate in social media platforms for educational purposes; providing applicability.

Section 2: Provides an effective date.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

The bill will require social media platforms to expend resources to develop standards and mechanisms to comply with the bill.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable. This bill does not appear to require counties or municipalities to spend funds or take action requiring the expenditures of funds; reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenues in the aggregate; or reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

On March 9, 2023, the Regulatory Reform & Economic Development Subcommittee adopted an amendment and reported the bill favorably as a committee substitute. The committee substitute:

- Defined “social media platform” as an online platform with users that are predominantly children.
- Required social media platforms to clearly post on their website certain user and moderation policies related to actions that may cause harms to children.
- Required social media platforms to provide access to resources and content controls to help prevent harm to children.
- Allowed social media platforms to post a statement on their website confirming that it has complied with the operating requirements.
- Prohibited certain K-12 schools from having social media accounts on platforms that do not contain a statement confirming compliance.
- Prohibited certain K-12 schools from requiring students to use social media as a part of their curriculum.

On March 27, 2023, the Choice & Innovation Subcommittee adopted one amendment and reported the bill favorably as a committee substitute. The amendment prohibits public K-12 schools, instead of all K-12 schools, from using certain social media platforms and requiring students to register or participate in a social media platform for educational activities.

The bill analysis is drafted to the committee substitute adopted by the Choice & Innovation Subcommittee.