FINAL [2:00, Timed]
Good afternoon,

My name is Devin Lee, a Junior attending Quince Orchard High School in Gaithersburg Maryland, and an avid involuntary social media user.

I was exposed to the internet at the ripe age of 10, where I was definitely mature enough to handle a device more powerful than the computer that landed NASA astronauts on the moon.

It took me over 7 years of being on the internet to finally feel comfortable engaging with it, as most of the time I felt as if the internet was using me, not the other way around. Posts on Instagram, for example, constantly show me unreasonable standards of how I should look, and act, and what I should be doing with my life. The mental "bar" is so high, it can lead kids to feel hopeless and permanently change a kid's mindset, all to make these ginormous companies a bit more cash.

Not only do the algorithms of many social media sites harm kids' mental health, but today's teens are also growing up in an era where social media platforms are becoming their primary source of information. These platforms have become breeding grounds for misinformation, conspiracy theories, and falsehoods. Many of these teenagers do not have the necessary tools to differentiate between accurate and misleading information, leading them to make poor decisions, spread false narratives, and engage in dangerous behavior.

I know firsthand how easy it is to get sucked into a rabbit hole of misinformation online. Feeling helpless, I decided to finally do something about it. I co-founded Social Media for Social justice, a student-led organization focused on educating high school kids about the dangers of misinformation on the internet. Teaching other kids has inspired me to speak in front of you today.

I wish there were an easy fix to keeping these social media companies accountable. If there was a big red button to erase the current social media apps and make better ones catering to students' mental health, I would press it in a heartbeat. Most people my age would too- but we can't get rid of it, so we need to learn how to deal with it.

By supporting this legislation, Maryland will help set the standard for online child and teen safety, and set simple, greater privacy settings as the default, which is proven to be effective. Design Code regulations have already been approved in the UK and California; we ought to have the same safeguards.

Thank you so much for allowing me to speak in front of you today. Please consider my story and many others going through the same problems on social media.

Maybe this bill will be the big red button!