



**TECHNET**  
THE VOICE OF THE  
INNOVATION ECONOMY

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February 19, 2024

The Honorable Pam Beidle  
Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
Maryland Senate  
3E Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

*RE: SB 739 (Hester) - Algorithmic Addiction Fund – Establishment.*

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of TechNet, I'm writing to offer comments on SB 739, related to the establishment of an Algorithm Addiction Fund.

TechNet is the national, bipartisan network of technology CEOs and senior executives that promotes the growth of the innovation economy by advocating a targeted policy agenda at the federal and 50-state level. TechNet's diverse membership includes dynamic American businesses ranging from startups to the most iconic companies on the planet and represents over 4.2 million employees and countless customers in the fields of information technology, e-commerce, the sharing and gig economies, advanced energy, cybersecurity, venture capital, and finance. TechNet has offices in Austin, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Harrisburg, Olympia, Sacramento, Silicon Valley, and Washington, D.C.

TechNet's member companies prioritize the safety and digital well-being of both children and adults who access their sites and platforms. Unfortunately, TechNet is opposed to SB 739 for a variety of reasons.

On its face, it is unclear where the funds are coming from. The bill states that the fund consists of "All revenues received, directly or indirectly, from a judgement against or a settlement with, technology conglomerates, technology companies, social media conglomerates, or social media companies relating to claims made or prosecuted by the state to recover damages for violations of state law". However, the legislation lacks detail as to which claims, judgements, or settlements will actually finance the fund.

Furthermore, the terms in the bill are extremely subjective, such as "algorithmic addiction" for intervention services. How is algorithmic addiction identified and defined?

Finally, the requirements put on the Secretary of Health to develop goals, key objectives, and key performance indicators relating to algorithmic addiction treatment and prevention efforts are also subjective and put decision-making in the hands of one individual. While the bill indicates the Secretary shall consult with stakeholders once a year, we believe that this is not enough engagement with outside groups. Additionally, the lack of a technology industry representative is concerning. Algorithms can be used for positive outcomes, such as highlighting programs or opportunities for groups such as women, racial minorities, and others. This bill assumes that all algorithms used online are inherently negative and that is not the case.

In conclusion, the best way to keep individuals safe online from suggested algorithmic addiction is by promoting the education of safe internet practices. We support policies that help prepare young people to be a successful part of a global, interconnected, and technology-driven economy. Such policies include supporting digital learning resources and technology integration in student learning environments, fully funded K-12 education, and rigorous computer science standards. Digital citizenship education is a top priority for TechNet and its member companies. Several businesses participate in the Digital Trust & Safety Partnership (DTSP), which outlines best practices for those operating in the digital space. We would suggest that concerned stakeholders proactively partner with organizations and companies supporting digital citizenship and online safety education.

Thank you for your consideration. Please don't hesitate to reach out should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

*Margaret Durkin*

Margaret Durkin  
TechNet Executive Director, Pennsylvania & the Mid-Atlantic