

HOUSE BILL 952

I3, O4

6lr1717

By: ~~Delegate Buckel~~ Delegates Buckel, Qi, Adams, Amprey, Arentz, Bhandari, Boafu, Charkoudian, Fennell, Howard, S. Johnson, Pippy, Pruski, Queen, Roberts, Rogers, Rose, Turner, Valderrama, and Wivell

Introduced and read first time: February 5, 2026

Assigned to: Economic Matters

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

House action: Adopted

Read second time: March 7, 2026

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Consumer Protection – Companion Chatbots – Regulation**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring certain operators of companion chatbots to establish,
4 maintain, and publish certain protocols and provide certain information to users of
5 the companion chatbot; requiring operators to establish enhanced measures for
6 minor users of companion chatbots; limiting the amount and type of data an operator
7 may collect; limiting the way an operator may use certain data; requiring an operator
8 to establish and maintain a complaint system; requiring the Office of Suicide
9 Prevention in the Maryland Department of Health to annually publish certain data
10 compiled from operators; establishing that a violation of this Act is an unfair,
11 abusive, or deceptive trade practice subject to enforcement and penalty provisions
12 under the Maryland Consumer Protection Act; establishing that a chatbot is
13 considered a product for certain product liability actions; and generally relating to
14 the regulation of companion chatbots.

15 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

16 Article – Commercial Law

17 Section 13–301(14)(xlvii)

18 Annotated Code of Maryland

19 (2025 Replacement Volume)

20 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

21 Article – Commercial Law

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 Section 13–301(14)(xlviii)
 2 Annotated Code of Maryland
 3 (2025 Replacement Volume)

4 BY adding to
 5 Article – Commercial Law
 6 Section 13–301(14)(xlix) and 14–1330
 7 Annotated Code of Maryland
 8 (2025 Replacement Volume)

9 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
 10 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

11 **Article – Commercial Law**

12 13–301.

13 Unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practices include any:

14 (14) Violation of a provision of:

15 (xlvii) Title 14, Subtitle 50 of this article; [or]

16 (xlviii) Section 13–411.1(c)(2) of the Transportation Article; or

17 **(XLIX) SECTION 14–1330 OF THIS ARTICLE; OR**

18 **14–1330.**

19 **(A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS**
 20 **INDICATED.**

21 **(2) “ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN §**
 22 **~~3.5–801 OF THE STATE FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT ARTICLE~~ 15–10B–05.1 OF**
 23 **THE INSURANCE ARTICLE.**

24 **(3) (I) “COMPANION CHATBOT” MEANS AN ARTIFICIAL**
 25 **INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM WITH A NATURAL LANGUAGE INTERFACE THAT PROVIDES**
 26 **ADAPTIVE, HUMAN–LIKE RESPONSES TO USER INPUTS AND IS CAPABLE OF MEETING**
 27 **A USER’S SOCIAL NEEDS, INCLUDING BY EXHIBITING ANTHROPOMORPHIC**
 28 **FEATURES AND BEING ABLE TO SUSTAIN A RELATIONSHIP ACROSS MULTIPLE**
 29 **INTERACTIONS.**

30 **(II) “COMPANION CHATBOT” DOES NOT INCLUDE:**

1 1. **A BOT THAT IS USED BY A BUSINESS ENTITY ONLY FOR**
2 **CUSTOMER SERVICE, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, BUSINESS ANALYTICS, OR INTERNAL**
3 **RESEARCH;**

4 2. **A BOT THAT:**

5 A. **IS A FEATURE OF A VIDEO GAME, SERVICE, SYSTEM,**
6 **OR APPLICATION THAT IS NOT A COMPANION CHATBOT;**

7 B. **IS LIMITED TO REPLIES RELATED TO THE VIDEO**
8 **GAME, SERVICE, SYSTEM, OR APPLICATION; AND**

9 C. **DOES NOT SHARE CONTENT RELATED TO MENTAL**
10 **HEALTH, SELF-HARM, SUICIDAL IDEATION, SUICIDE, OR SEXUALLY EXPLICIT**
11 **CONDUCT; ~~OR~~**

12 3. **A BOT THAT IS DESIGNED FOR BUSINESS**
13 **PRODUCTIVITY OR INTERNAL BUSINESS USE; OR**

14 4. **A CONSUMER ELECTRONIC DEVICE THAT:**

15 A. **FUNCTIONS AS A SPEAKER AND A VOICE COMMAND**
16 **INTERFACE;**

17 B. **ACTS AS A VOICE-ACTIVATED VIRTUAL ASSISTANT;**

18 C. **DOES NOT SUSTAIN A RELATIONSHIP ACROSS**
19 **MULTIPLE INTERACTIONS; AND**

20 D. **DOES NOT GENERATE OUTPUTS THAT ARE LIKELY TO**
21 **ELICIT EMOTIONAL RESPONSES FROM THE USER.**

22 (4) **“DE-IDENTIFIED DATA” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN § 14-4401**
23 **OF THIS TITLE.**

24 ~~(4)~~ (5) **“MINOR USER” MEANS A USER OF A COMPANION CHATBOT**
25 **THAT AN OPERATOR KNOWS OR REASONABLY SHOULD KNOW IS A MINOR.**

26 ~~(5)~~ (6) **“OFFICE” MEANS THE OFFICE OF SUICIDE PREVENTION IN**
27 **THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.**

28 ~~(6)~~ (7) **“OPERATOR” MEANS A PERSON WHO MAKES A COMPANION**
29 **CHATBOT AVAILABLE TO A USER IN THE STATE.**

1 **(8) (I) "PERSONAL DATA" MEANS ANY INFORMATION THAT IS**
2 **LINKED OR CAN BE REASONABLY LINKED TO AN IDENTIFIED OR IDENTIFIABLE**
3 **CONSUMER.**

4 **(II) "PERSONAL DATA" DOES NOT INCLUDE:**

5 **1. DE-IDENTIFIED DATA; OR**

6 **2. PUBLICLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION.**

7 ~~**(7) (9)**~~ **"SEXUALLY EXPLICIT CONDUCT" HAS THE MEANING**
8 **STATED IN 18 U.S.C. § 2256.**

9 ~~**(8) (10)**~~ **"VIDEO GAME" MEANS A GAME PLAYED ON AN ELECTRONIC**
10 **DEVICE THAT:**

11 **(I) UTILIZES A COMPUTER, A MICROPROCESSOR, OR SIMILAR**
12 **ELECTRONIC CIRCUITRY AND A MONITOR, OR THAT IS DESIGNED TO BE PLAYED**
13 **USING A TELEVISION OR A COMPUTER MONITOR; AND**

14 **(II) INTERACTS WITH THE INDIVIDUAL PLAYING THE GAME,**
15 **INCLUDING THROUGH A CHATBOT.**

16 **(B) (1) AN OPERATOR SHALL ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A PROTOCOL**
17 **FOR PREVENTING A COMPANION CHATBOT FROM PRODUCING OR PRESENTING**
18 **CONTENT CONCERNING SELF-HARM, SUICIDAL IDEATION, OR SUICIDE TO A USER**
19 **WHO EXPRESSES THOUGHTS OF SELF-HARM OR SUICIDAL IDEATION TO THE**
20 **COMPANION CHATBOT.**

21 **(2) THE PROTOCOL REQUIRED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS**
22 **SUBSECTION SHALL INCLUDE A NOTIFICATION TO A USER WHO EXPRESSES**
23 **THOUGHTS OF SELF-HARM OR SUICIDAL IDEATION THAT REFERS THE USER TO A**
24 **CRISIS SERVICE PROVIDER, INCLUDING:**

25 **(I) THE MARYLAND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISIS RESPONSE**
26 **SYSTEM; AND**

27 **(II) THE NATIONAL 9-8-8 SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE.**

28 **(3) AN OPERATOR SHALL USE EVIDENCE-BASED METHODS FOR**
29 **DETECTING WHEN A USER IS EXPRESSING THOUGHTS OF SELF-HARM OR SUICIDAL**
30 **IDEATION TO A COMPANION CHATBOT.**

1 (4) AN OPERATOR SHALL PUBLISH THE PROTOCOL REQUIRED UNDER
2 PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION ON THE OPERATOR'S WEBSITE.

3 (C) (1) AN OPERATOR SHALL ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A PROTOCOL
4 FOR PREVENTING A COMPANION CHATBOT FROM PRODUCING OR PRESENTING TO A
5 MINOR USER CONTENT CONCERNING SEXUALLY EXPLICIT CONDUCT, INCLUDING:

6 (I) VISUAL DEPICTIONS OF SEXUALLY EXPLICIT CONDUCT; AND

7 (II) CONTENT SUGGESTING THAT THE MINOR USER SHOULD
8 ENGAGE IN SEXUALLY EXPLICIT CONDUCT.

9 (2) AN OPERATOR SHALL PUBLISH THE PROTOCOL REQUIRED UNDER
10 PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION ON THE OPERATOR'S WEBSITE.

11 (D) AN OPERATOR SHALL DISPLAY A CLEAR AND CONSPICUOUS WARNING
12 TO A USER STATING THAT COMPANION CHATBOTS:

13 (1) ARE ARTIFICIALLY GENERATED AND NOT HUMAN; AND

14 (2) MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR SOME MINORS.

15 ~~(E) AN OPERATOR SHALL DISPLAY TO A MINOR USER A CLEAR AND~~
16 ~~CONSPICUOUS WARNING AFTER 3 HOURS OF CONSECUTIVE USE, AND EVERY 3~~
17 ~~HOURS THEREAFTER;~~

18 ~~(1) STATING THAT COMPANION CHATBOTS ARE ARTIFICIALLY~~
19 ~~GENERATED AND NOT HUMAN; AND~~

20 ~~(2) RECOMMENDING THAT THE USER TAKE A BREAK FROM USING THE~~
21 ~~COMPANION CHATBOT.~~

22 (E) A DEVELOPER SHALL ESTABLISH AND PROVIDE TO A USER OF THE
23 OPERATOR'S CHATBOT CLEAR AND CONSPICUOUS WARNINGS THAT THE CHATBOT IS
24 ARTIFICIALLY GENERATED AND NOT HUMAN THROUGH THE USE OF BOTH:

25 (1) A STATIC, PERSISTENT WARNING THAT CONTINUOUSLY APPEARS
26 ON THE SCREEN; AND

27 (2) A DYNAMIC WARNING THAT POPS UP ON THE SCREEN AND
28 REQUIRES A USER TO RESPOND:

29 (I) AT THE START OF THE USER'S INTERACTION WITH THE
30 CHATBOT;

1 (II) AFTER EVERY HOUR OF THE USER'S CONTINUOUS
 2 INTERACTION WITH THE CHATBOT; AND

3 (III) WHEN PROMPTED BY THE USER IN A MANNER THAT
 4 QUESTIONS HOW THE CHATBOT FUNCTIONS OR PROVIDES RESPONSES.

5 (F) (1) A CONTROLLER SHALL LIMIT THE COLLECTION OF PERSONAL
 6 DATA TO WHAT IS REASONABLY NECESSARY AND PROPORTIONATE TO SATISFY THE
 7 REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SUBTITLE.

8 (2) A CONTROLLER MAY NOT USE DATA REGARDING EMOTIONAL
 9 STATE OR MENTAL HEALTH VULNERABILITIES TO TAILOR ALGORITHMS TO
 10 INCREASE THE DURATION OR FREQUENCY OF USE OF A CHATBOT.

11 (G) (1) A CONTROLLER SHALL ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A COMPLAINT
 12 SYSTEM THAT ENABLES A USER TO REPORT CONTENT PRODUCED OR PRESENTED BY
 13 A CHATBOT THAT VIOLATES THIS SECTION.

14 (2) WITHIN 3 CALENDAR DAYS AFTER A COMPLAINT IS FILED UNDER
 15 PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE CONTROLLER SHALL:

16 (I) REVIEW THE CONTENT REPORTED;

17 (II) TAKE ALL REASONABLE STEPS TO:

18 1. REMOVE ANY CONTENT THAT VIOLATES THIS
 19 SECTION; AND

20 2. PREVENT ANY FURTHER PRESENTATION OR
 21 PRODUCTION OF THE CONTENT IN A MANNER THAT VIOLATES THIS SECTION; AND

22 (III) REPORT THE COMPLAINT AND THE RESULTS OF THE
 23 REVIEW TO THE OFFICE.

24 ~~(F)~~ (H) (1) ON OR BEFORE MARCH 1 EACH YEAR, BEGINNING IN 2027,
 25 AN OPERATOR SHALL REPORT TO THE OFFICE:

26 (I) INFORMATION ON THE PROTOCOLS REQUIRED UNDER
 27 SUBSECTIONS (B) AND (C) OF THIS SECTION;

28 (II) THE NUMBER OF TIMES THE OPERATOR HAS ISSUED A
 29 NOTIFICATION UNDER SUBSECTION (B)(2) OF THIS SECTION; ~~AND~~

1 (III) DETAILS ABOUT THE METHODS USED UNDER SUBSECTION
2 (B)(3) OF THIS SECTION; AND

3 (IV) ALL COMPLAINTS FILED UNDER SUBSECTION (G) OF THIS
4 SECTION, INCLUDING THE RESULTS OF THE REVIEW OF EACH COMPLAINT AND ANY
5 FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS TAKEN.

6 (2) THE REPORT REQUIRED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS
7 SUBSECTION MAY NOT CONTAIN ANY PERSONAL IDENTIFYING INFORMATION ABOUT
8 A USER.

9 (3) ON OR BEFORE JULY 1 EACH YEAR, BEGINNING IN 2027, THE
10 OFFICE SHALL:

11 (I) COMPILE DATA FROM THE REPORTS SUBMITTED UNDER
12 PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION FOR THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING
13 CALENDAR YEAR; AND

14 (II) PUBLISH THE DATA ON THE OFFICE'S WEBSITE.

15 ~~(6)~~ (I) (1) A VIOLATION OF THIS SECTION IS:

16 ~~(1)~~ (I) AN UNFAIR, ABUSIVE, OR DECEPTIVE TRADE PRACTICE
17 WITHIN THE MEANING OF TITLE 13 OF THIS ARTICLE; AND

18 ~~(2)~~ (II) SUBJECT TO THE ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTY
19 PROVISIONS CONTAINED IN TITLE 13 OF THIS ARTICLE, EXCEPT § 13-411 OF THIS
20 ARTICLE.

21 (2) IN ADDITION TO THE REMEDIES CONTAINED IN TITLE 13 OF THIS
22 ARTICLE, A CHATBOT SHALL BE CONSIDERED A PRODUCT FOR WHICH:

23 1. AN OPERATOR AND A DEVELOPER HAVE AN AFFIRMATIVE
24 DUTY TO ENSURE DOES NOT INJURE OR HARM A USER;

25 2. AN OPERATOR OR A DEVELOPER MAY BE HELD STRICTLY
26 LIABLE FOR CAUSING INJURY OR HARM TO A USER; AND

27 3. AN INDIVIDUAL MAY BRING AN ACTION FOR A DESIGN
28 DEFECT, A MANUFACTURING DEFECT, OR A MARKETING DEFECT.

29 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
30 October 1, 2026.