

# HOUSE BILL 952

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By: Delegate Buckel

Introduced and read first time: February 5, 2026

Assigned to: Economic Matters

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## A BILL ENTITLED

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; requiring the Office of Suicide Prevention in the  
7 Maryland Department of Health to annually publish certain data compiled from  
8 operators; establishing that a violation of this Act is an unfair, abusive, or deceptive  
9 trade practice subject to enforcement and penalty provisions under the Maryland  
10 Consumer Protection Act; and generally relating to the regulation of companion  
11 chatbots.

12 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
13 Article – Commercial Law  
14 Section 13–301(14)(xlvii)  
15 Annotated Code of Maryland  
16 (2025 Replacement Volume)

17 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,  
18 Article – Commercial Law  
19 Section 13–301(14)(xlviii)  
20 Annotated Code of Maryland  
21 (2025 Replacement Volume)

22 BY adding to  
23 Article – Commercial Law  
24 Section 13–301(14)(xlii) and 14–1330  
25 Annotated Code of Maryland  
26 (2025 Replacement Volume)

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



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

3 **Article – Commercial Law**

4 13–301.

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

6 (14) Violation of a provision of:

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

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

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

10 **14–1330.**

11 (A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS  
12 INDICATED.

13 (2) “ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN §  
14 3.5–801 OF THE STATE FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT ARTICLE.

15 (3) (I) “COMPANION CHATBOT” MEANS AN ARTIFICIAL  
16 INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM WITH A NATURAL LANGUAGE INTERFACE THAT PROVIDES  
17 ADAPTIVE, HUMAN–LIKE RESPONSES TO USER INPUTS AND IS CAPABLE OF MEETING  
18 A USER’S SOCIAL NEEDS, INCLUDING BY EXHIBITING ANTHROPOMORPHIC  
19 FEATURES AND BEING ABLE TO SUSTAIN A RELATIONSHIP ACROSS MULTIPLE  
20 INTERACTIONS.

21 (II) “COMPANION CHATBOT” DOES NOT INCLUDE:

22 1. A BOT THAT IS USED BY A BUSINESS ENTITY ONLY FOR  
23 CUSTOMER SERVICE, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, BUSINESS ANALYTICS, OR INTERNAL  
24 RESEARCH;

25 2. A BOT THAT:

26 A. IS A FEATURE OF A VIDEO GAME;

27 B. IS LIMITED TO REPLIES RELATED TO THE VIDEO  
28 GAME; AND

### 3. A CONSUMER ELECTRONIC DEVICE THAT:

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

20 (8) "VIDEO GAME" MEANS A GAME PLAYED ON AN ELECTRONIC  
21 DEVICE THAT:

25 (II) INTERACTS WITH THE INDIVIDUAL PLAYING THE GAME,  
26 INCLUDING THROUGH A CHATBOT.

27 (B) (1) AN OPERATOR SHALL ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A PROTOCOL  
28 FOR PREVENTING A COMPANION CHATBOT FROM PRODUCING OR PRESENTING  
29 CONTENT CONCERNING SELF-HARM, SUICIDAL IDEATION, OR SUICIDE TO A USER

1 WHO EXPRESSES THOUGHTS OF SELF-HARM OR SUICIDAL IDEATION TO THE  
2 COMPANION CHATBOT.

3 (2) THE PROTOCOL REQUIRED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS  
4 SUBSECTION SHALL INCLUDE A NOTIFICATION TO A USER WHO EXPRESSES  
5 THOUGHTS OF SELF-HARM OR SUICIDAL IDEATION THAT REFERS THE USER TO A  
6 CRISIS SERVICE PROVIDER, INCLUDING:

7 (I) THE MARYLAND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISIS RESPONSE  
8 SYSTEM; AND

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 (E) AN OPERATOR SHALL DISPLAY TO A MINOR USER A CLEAR AND  
28 CONSPICUOUS WARNING AFTER 3 HOURS OF CONSECUTIVE USE, AND EVERY 3  
29 HOURS THEREAFTER:

1 (1) STATING THAT COMPANION CHATBOTS ARE ARTIFICIALLY  
2 GENERATED AND NOT HUMAN; AND

5 (F) (1) ON OR BEFORE MARCH 1 EACH YEAR, BEGINNING IN 2027, AN  
6 OPERATOR SHALL REPORT TO THE OFFICE:

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

11 (III) DETAILS ABOUT THE METHODS USED UNDER SUBSECTION  
12 (B)(3) OF THIS SECTION.

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

18 (I) COMPILE DATA FROM THE REPORTS SUBMITTED UNDER  
19 PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION FOR THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING  
20 CALENDAR YEAR; AND

**(ii) PUBLISH THE DATA ON THE OFFICE'S WEBSITE.**

22 (G) A VIOLATION OF THIS SECTION IS:

25 (2) SUBJECT TO THE ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTY PROVISIONS  
26 CONTAINED IN TITLE 13 OF THIS ARTICLE, EXCEPT § 13-411 OF THIS ARTICLE.

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