



***Mission:*** To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy  
***Vision:*** Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 0901**  
**Consumer Protection - Online Products and Services - Children's Data**  
**Committee: Economic Matters**  
**By: Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA)**  
**Hearing Date: March 1, 2023**

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and the members of the Economic Matters Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 901, which the Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) would like to express its support for. This bill would require privacy protections, clear documentation of data sharing and collection methods, and direct notification of risks associated with any business that offers online products that could be accessed by children.

Children are increasingly accessing the internet and interacting with its features. Daily screen time hours among tweens and teens have increased by 17% from 2019-2021.<sup>1</sup> For most, these interactions include unknowingly providing sensitive data, monetary support, and extensive hours of their time. 77% of respondents to a survey conducted by the Child Mind Institute on parental concerns on screen time and its effects agreed that children could be addicted to the internet; 67% of respondents to the same survey indicating their concern about content available to their children.<sup>2</sup>

Children are also more susceptible to risks of the internet because they have grown up with it and are expected to be “early adopters’ of emerging technologies.”<sup>3</sup> A 2021 report from the United Nations Human Rights Council has reported that social media usage has doubled in rate among children between 9-12 years old, indicating that around 40% of this population has multiple social media profiles.<sup>4</sup> In addition, 80% of children from developed Western countries also have a digital footprint before two years of age (according to the same report).

In a time where there is significant emphasis on institutionalized codes of conduct in regards to privacy matters, there is simultaneously a need for more knowledge on how children interact with and are affected by privacy/data collection matters on the internet. Additionally, children are least able to comprehend and manage commercial privacy and its aspects<sup>5</sup>; this fact indicates a demand for governmental policies and procedures to mitigate struggles experienced by a less-informed population and establish a safer online space for children to learn, explore, and play.

Thank you for your consideration; we urge a favorable report for House Bill 901.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/24/well/family/child-social-media-use.html#:~:text=On%20average%2C%20daily%20screen%20use,\(ages%2013%20to%2018\).](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/24/well/family/child-social-media-use.html#:~:text=On%20average%2C%20daily%20screen%20use,(ages%2013%20to%2018).)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.morganstanley.com/articles/family-internet-use-survey>

<sup>3</sup> <https://5rightsfoundation.com/our-work/child-online-protection/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2021/07/childrens-right-privacy-digital-age-must-be-improved>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/assets/documents/research/projects/childrens-privacy-online/Evidence-review-final.pdf>

*The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.*

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