



## SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Dear Chair Griffith and Committee Members,

We, as the students on the leadership team for [Social Media for Social Justice](#), are writing to express our strong support for the Maryland Age Appropriate Design Code - SB 844 (Senators Kramer and West). Social Media for Social Justice is a youth-led advocacy organization dedicated to changing the way our generation and others view and use social media in today's world. As social media and technology becomes increasingly influential with each day, it is up to us to ensure that we use social media to push for justice in our communities and spaces, and not to spread disinformation and harm.

In 2020, it was found that 81% of 14 to 22-year-olds said they used social media either "daily" or "almost constantly." This constant use of social media is deliberately taken advantage of and designed solely to benefit the private companies creating these technologies. We as students have seen the effect of social media on our peers firsthand at our schools and in our communities; while such companies profit consistently from social media, our mental health and safety suffers. Even more, these designs created by social media companies are not only used to attract young people to the algorithm, to scrolling, but are also used in a manner that only puts children at further risk on the Internet. In fact, 75% of the top social media platforms use AI to recommend children's profiles to strangers. It is abundantly clear that children are not safe online, and the companies behind the social media platforms we use are not on our side.

To promote our mission, we at Social Media for Social Justice have worked to bring a four-day workshop series to people from around the nation, educating interested students and parents on the dangers of social media, but also how it may be used to support important social causes. At our last session on February 26th, 2023, **45% of attending students said that they did not feel safe online**, while 100% agreed that students should be able to be safe online, no matter the circumstances. Anyone can use the Internet, leaving young people susceptible to danger, oftentimes against their own beliefs or will. As a result, we are often subjected to inappropriate content: 95% of the commonly downloaded apps marketed to or played by children 5 and under contain at least one type of advertising, including advertising that is age-inappropriate.

Social media is constantly growing, alongside new and upcoming technologies each and every day. It aids in communication - at Social Media for Social Justice, we recognize it can be used to create movements and to advocate for justice. However, while older adolescents may be able to recognize right from wrong on the Internet, not everyone can, especially younger children. It is not only up to us as student advocates, but our lawmakers and government, to pursue safer social media for all.

Maryland has the opportunity to lead the nation in protecting our children online and prioritizing well-being over profit, childhood over exploitation. By supporting SB 844, we will not only ensure a safer Internet for children today, but for generations to come. We call on

Maryland lawmakers to put children's interests ahead of those of the tech industry by supporting the Age Appropriate Design Code.

Sincerely,

Social Media for Social Justice