

February 13, 2024

Re: HB 603 | Consumer Protection - Online Products and Services - Data of Children (Maryland Kids Code)

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

My name is Zaria Naqvi, I am a sophomore at Winston Churchill High School in Montgomery County and serve as the Student Liaison to the School Safety Subcabinet. I am writing to express my strong support for HB 603: Consumer Protection - Online Products and Services - Data of Children (Maryland Kids Code), previously introduced as HB0901. This legislation is of paramount importance to me, my peers, and the broader community of young internet users across Maryland.

As someone who began downloading and actively using social media platforms at the age of 12 for extracurricular activities and student elections, I have firsthand experience with the digital landscape that today's youth navigate. These platforms, while offering significant opportunities for engagement and learning, also expose young users to various risks related to data privacy and security. Many of my peers and I have encountered situations where our personal information was collected, shared, or used in ways that we neither consented to nor fully understood. This exposure has led to concerns about privacy and, in some cases, negative consequences that affect our online and offline lives. At the young age of 15, I am to this day learning about how to best protect my privacy whilst traversing through the high tech society we live in.

HB 603 addresses these concerns head-on by requiring entities offering online products likely to be accessed by children to complete a data protection impact assessment under certain circumstances. It also mandates specific privacy protections for these online products and prohibits certain data collection and sharing practices. This legislation is crucial for ensuring that the digital environment is safe and respectful of children's privacy rights.

In an era where digital participation is nearly unavoidable, protecting the privacy of young internet users is essential. By implementing these measures, Maryland can lead the way in safeguarding children's online experiences, setting a precedent for other states to follow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zaria Naqvi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Zaria Naqvi