

February 9, 2024

The Honorable C. T. Wilson  
House Economic Matters Committee  
6 Bladen Street, Room 231  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

### **HB 603 (Dels. Solomon, Wilson, and Love) - Favorable**

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby and committee members,

My name is Christine McComas. My husband David and I are lifelong Marylanders, and we raised our four children, including Grace McComas, in Howard County.

Maryland's Anti-Cyberbullying criminal statute, Grace's Law, bears her name.

I am writing to share my support for HB 603- Maryland Kids Code.

Grace is the third of our four girls. Her sisters are all now strong, independent, and successful adults, but our beloved Grace Katherine is forever 15, having died by suicide on Easter Sunday 2012 related to abuse on social media.

Grace was a funny, wonderfully kind, and well-loved human being and was the most joy-filled person I have ever known. She was a sweet, communicative teen busy with school, sports, music and community service.

She never had a smartphone and wasn't even on Twitter, but didn't need to be, to be harmed, as hatred, malicious, death-wishing tweets instantaneously travel far and wide and become inescapable when blasted on social media:

#### **"Tweets" Aimed at a Child**

- **"i hate hate hate hate hate hate hate you. Next time my name rolls off your tongue, choke on it.. and DIE."**
- **"i hope you somehow see this and cry yourself to sleep then kill yourself....might as well your just a worthless piece of shi\*."**

- **“No one f\*\*\*ing likes you. It's just sad and I kind of feel bad for you.”**
- **“snitches need to have their fingers cut off one by one as they watch their families burn”**
- **“kind of reminds me of when one of my followers printed out a tweet of mine, like who the f\*\*\* goes that far #peopleshoulddie”**
  - **“snitches...i will kill you”**
  - **“well damn i just got out of trouble... How stupid it is that one person can f\*\*k so much up #cun\*\*”**

We tried desperately for months to get help before it was too late, including mental health support for her, as we shared the screenshots of the abuse with multiple public agencies, (including schools, police and courts) and literally begged for assistance. As we stood over our daughter’s brain-dead body at Johns Hopkins, we were devastated and outraged at the injustice of it all. We knew we had to start speaking out, telling Grace’s story, to warn other parents about the hidden dangers of the internet.

The Maryland community heard as many worked diligently and Grace’s Law passed unanimously both in 2013 and when it was updated in 2019- Grace’s Law 2.0- to cover the ever-changing landscape of digital dangers, including sextortion, suicide baiting and more.

**No laws have been passed at the federal level since before smartphones and social media existed.**

**It’s been 12 YEARS since Grace died and kids are at more risk now than ever.**

Over the past decade I’ve come to know families with tragic stories from around the world, and regularly get heartbreaking messages from other Maryland parents, right here at home, urgently needing assistance to protect their own children online.

**Right now, *even the best, most engaged parents* are *unable* to keep their kids safe online.**

Secret until recently, algorithms are push-feeding dangerous and psychologically damaging content TOWARDS our kids, and platforms are designed to addict and keep them online for longer, driving up profits with little care for the collateral damage.

By the time a child reaches 13, an average of **72 MILLION** data points have been collected about them. (Geoffrey Fowler, Washington Post)

In 2022 social media companies made an astonishing **11 BILLION** dollars in ad revenue from those minors. (Harvard School of Public Health study).

Last week I joined other grieving parents to attend the hearing on Capitol Hill where senators grilled Mark Zuckerberg of Meta(Facebook & Instagram), and the CEOs of TikTok (Shou Zi Chew), Twitter/X (Linda Yaccarino), Snapchat (Evan Spiegel) and Discord (Jason Citron) to account for harms to children by their platforms.

There was a lot of empty, misleading talk. You will undoubtedly hear their highly paid lawyers spin a similar tale today. *Don't believe it.*

This legislation is desperately needed and there is no time to wait.

Maryland families deserve these protections NOW.

I am heartened that with its passage, MD will AGAIN be a leader in the fight to protect children online.

Thank you.

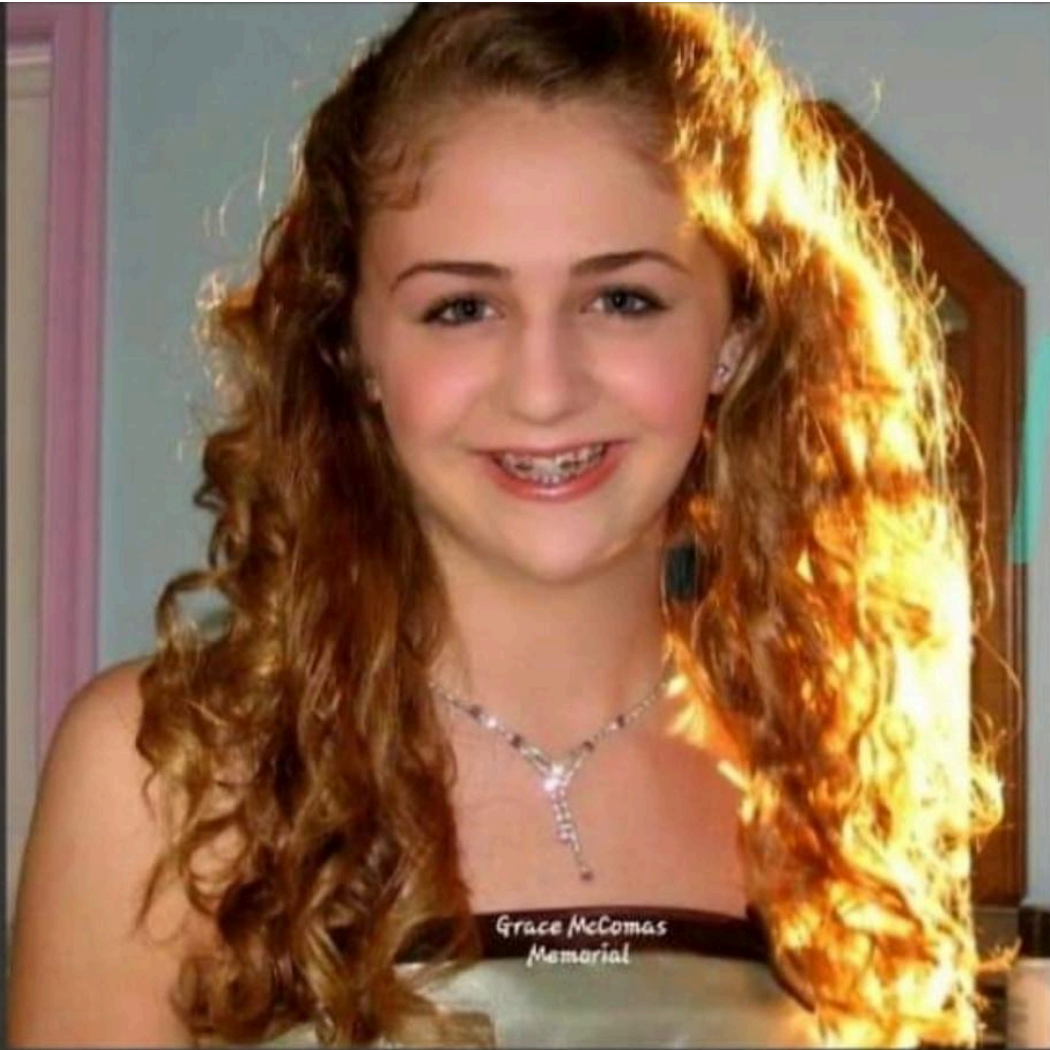
Christine McComas, mother of Grace

**Remember G.R.A.C.E.~**

**by Giving Respect And Compassion to Everyone**







## GRACE McCOMAS MEMORIAL

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Social Media can kill  
Protect Kids NOW

**Grace K. McComas Memorial Webpage**

JAN 20 AT 8:12 PM



Maryland's  
Grace's Law 2.0



Cyberbullies Beware







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