



Testimony to the House Economic Matters Committee
HB603 Consumer Protection - Online Products and Services - Data of Children
(Maryland Kids Code)
Position: Favorable

February, 2024

The Honorable C.T. Wilson, Chair
House Economic Matters Committee
Room 231, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
cc: Members, House Economic Matters

Honorable Chair Wilson and members of the committee:

Economic Action Maryland (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations that advances economic rights and equity for Maryland families through research, education, direct service, and advocacy. Our 12,500 supporters include consumer advocates, practitioners, and low-income and working families throughout Maryland.

We are writing today in support of HB603. HB603 places limitations on what companies can do with children's data, including tracking and profiling, and expands transparency so that users know how and consent to the ways their information is being used. HB603 requires a data impact assessment be completed by businesses that offer online products likely to be accessed by children.

HB603 is timely and important. Maryland addressed these issues in 2009 with the passage of the Online Safety Act¹ but technology is constantly evolving and morphing. At the same time, our understanding of the impact of social media, technology, and algorithms is growing. While there are benefits to online use and gatherings, inappropriate, extreme, and harmful content is too easily accessible for many young people and teens².

Algorithms both have the potential to discriminate against individuals based on race, ethnicity or other attributes but can also be engineered to target young people and amplify the addictive qualities of the media in harmful ways for youth mental and physical health³. HB603 addresses emerging technology, protects youth's data privacy, and expands consent.

For these reasons, we support HB603 and urge a favorable report.

Best,

Marceline White
Executive Director

¹ Md. Code Ann., Com. Law § 14-3702

² <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/social-media-teen-mental-health-a-parents-guide>

³ <https://www.techpolicy.press/2024-set-to-be-crucial-year-for-child-online-safety-litigation/>

