

FAVORABLE
House Bill 603
Online Products and Services – Data of Children (Maryland Kids Code)

House Economic Matters Committee
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Lauren Lamb
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 603, which would require a business that offers an online product reasonably likely to be accessed by children to complete a data protection impact assessment and add privacy protections for certain online products. It would also prohibit certain data collection and sharing practices.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Educators know that students' learning is impacted by their experiences outside the classroom. Social media is increasingly a part of those experiences: ninety-five percent of teenagers in the U.S. have access to a smartphone, and a majority of teenagers say that it would be difficult to stop using social media.¹ Though online platforms have benefits – including for teaching and engaging students in the classroom – young people are simultaneously suffering the effects of unregulated social media practices and content, including invasive data collection, targeted advertising content,

¹ Teens, Social Media, and Technology. Pew Research Center (2022).
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/08/10/teens-social-media-and-technology-2022/>



misinformation, and harassment.² In 2021, 16% of high school students reported that they had been bullied through social media, and considerable research suggests that the contents of adolescents' social media feeds impact their self-esteem and mental health.^{3 4}

All children deserve to learn and thrive in a safe environment, including online. Especially as an increasing number of students report mental health challenges, Maryland should lead by example and take action to enact common sense regulations for social media and other online platforms used by children.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 603.

² NEA's letter to social media companies. National Education Association (2021). [NEA's letter to social media companies | NEA](#)

³ Youth Risk Behavior Survey: 2011-2021. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023). https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/YRBS_Data-Summary-Trends_Report2023_508.pdf

⁴ How can we minimize Instagram's harmful effects? American Psychological Association (2021). <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/03/feature-minimize-instagram-effects>