



### **House Bill 603**

### **Consumer Protection - Online Products and Services - Data of Children (Maryland Kids Code)**

Economic Matters Committee, February 13, 2024, 1:00 PM

**Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST) is a statewide organization dedicated to closing opportunity gaps by expanding both the quantity and quality of afterschool and summer learning opportunities for school-aged young people. MOST is one of the fifty statewide networks supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and serves as Maryland's affiliate to the National Afterschool Association. MOST serves as the backbone organization for the Maryland Coalition for Community Schools. The Maryland Coalition for Community Schools, founded in 2016, advocates for student and family success by leading the charge to expand the Community School Model in Maryland.

Within the field of youth development, our leaders and practitioners are painfully aware that young people are now engaging with technology 24/7. Students use technology daily in school to communicate with family and friends, consume entertainment, and often they create their own media. These technology intersections are largely unbound and unfiltered and present great opportunities and great risks.

While it is impossible and likely undesirable to control all aspects of a young person's journey in the digital age, we can offer guardrails that make it less likely they will be exploited and harmed. For this reason, we enthusiastically support House Bill 603. Modeled after successful legislation from the United Kingdom, with other states following suit, this common-sense legislation requires technology companies to follow best practices and protections that should already be in place around data collection and sharing, privacy settings, and transparency--appropriate by age.

Adults often do not have the necessary information or technological savvy to ensure that settings are implemented to safeguard our children. HB 603 will place the onus on the technology companies that have the capability to implement these shields. Maryland should be a leader and early adopter, encouraging other states and the federal government to take similar action. We applaud Delegate Solomon for sponsoring HB 603 and encourage the committee to provide a favorable report.

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