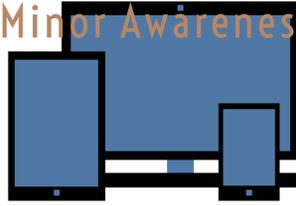


# Matthew E. Minor Awareness Foundation



Putting Children's Safety on Social Media, First

Talking Points:

MD Senate & House -Annapolis Feb13th and Feb 14th

Greetings to the honorable and esteemed members of the Maryland House/Senate. My name is Todd Minor Sr. I am here with my wife, Mia, and our family to advocate for the passage of the Maryland Kids Code Bill in the House and Senate.

First, we thank Bill sponsors Maryland State Sen. Ben Kramer, Del. Jared Solomon, and Del. C.T. Wilson, who have shown their continuing commitment to online child safety. We also want to thank our partners in advocacy, the 5 Rights Foundation, Parents Together, and Fairplay for Kids.

By sharing our story, we hope to help keep other children and families from going through the tragic events we have endured. We want to drive home that our children aren't as safe as possible while online until this bill is passed and made law in our state.



Our son, Matthew Emmanuel Minor (Matt), was a very loving & compassionate child. He was a big hugger. Matthew had a very charismatic & loving personality and had a wonderful smile that would light up the room. Matthew was active in martial arts, football, and basketball. He cherished his time at our family gatherings, especially those at the family farm in Tappahannock, Virginia. Matthew mentioned several times wanting to serve his country by joining the military like his father and grandfather—a family tradition. Matt was considered an "ambassador" of Accokeek Academy, where he attended school. He

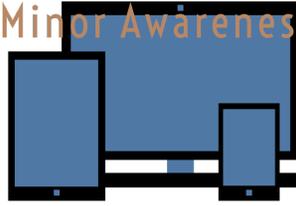
showed the new kids where their classes were and defended them against anyone picking on them. Also, instinctively, Matt was active in his church, academy, and the local community. At the tender age of 12, he understood you can show no more excellent care for someone than protecting others.

On the evening of March 7<sup>th</sup>, our world was devastated and forever changed by our son TJ pleading to us to come upstairs and that something terrible had happened to Matthew. Although my wife Mia was starting new treatments for multiple sclerosis, and I was recovering from a recent surgery to remove cancer that subsequently resulted in a leg injury, rendering me unable to walk, the adrenaline kicked in, and I was immediately running upstairs without my walker to check on Matt.

My military training kicked in, and I started assessing the situation. Matt had something tied around his neck. Why was that there? Find out later, I told myself. I



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removed the cord, and I began CPR. Mia called 911,. While doing this, we asked the almighty why this was happening and to take us instead; he was only 12. I continued to perform CPR until the EMTs showed up. Around 2:30 am at the hospital, the doctor came in and notified us that Matthew died. It was unbelievable and shocking; we had just eaten dinner.

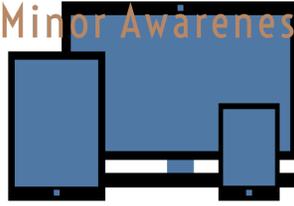
While speaking with the police detective, we discovered the choking challenge or the "blackout" challenge that kids were participating in on YouTube and TikTok.

This fact was also supported by talking with children who confirmed Matt was participating in the choking challenge at Matt's tribute service the day before his funeral. What are these social media challenges? We asked ourselves, what can we do about it?

With the support of our Pastors at Victory Church, our family (T.J., Momma Ruth, Tiffany, Jonathan, Tray and John), extended family, and fellow parents and community, we created the Matthew E. Minor Awareness Foundation to bring awareness about the hidden dangers of the internet to our children and teens, such as online cyberbullying, self-harm, cyberdares, i.e. (Knock-out challenges/ Blackout Challenge) and helping families cope with grief after losing a loved one. We have also established a college scholarship fund for local college-bound students in the D.C., MD, and V.A. areas to further their future educational goals. We aspire to make this a national scholarship in due time.

- We've joined forces with other parents, educators, mental health professionals, and other concerned community members to support the Maryland Kids Code bill and similar legislative efforts nationwide, becoming voices in a growing movement that seeks to hold tech companies accountable.
- These laws, which are age-appropriate design model bills, represent a critical step in shifting the burden of online safety from resting solely on families to being shared with the digital platforms themselves from the moment they design their products.
- We need legislative action to force social media companies and other digital service providers to prioritize the well-being of their youngest users.. a framework that could prevent other families from enduring the kind of pain ours has faced.
- The Maryland Age-Appropriate Design Code Bill would require tech companies to prioritize the safety of children – instead of profits. There is a similar law in place in the United Kingdom that has led to an immediate change for kids in the U.K. — including

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TikTok turning off strangers' ability to message kids, Google turning on Safe Search by default, and YouTube turning off autoplay by default for users under the age of 18.

- Our children in Maryland and the U.S. don't have these protections yet, but the Age-Appropriate Design Code could help to change that.



- **If laws such as the Maryland Kids Code were in place, this tragedy would not have happened to our family.**
- **We ask you to support and pass the Maryland Kids Code Bill, so this does not happen to other children and families.**

***Let us tell the rest of the country a loud message that Maryland values its children's safety above anything else.***