

Written Testimony of Aaron Poynton
President, Harford County Board of Education
In Support of MD Kids Code, SB 571
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
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Good morning, Chair and members of the Maryland Senate Finance Committee. My name is Dr. Aaron Poynton; I am the President of the Harford County Board of Education and a concerned father of three. Today, I stand before you to discuss a matter of urgent importance—the safety and well-being of our children in the digital age, as addressed by MD Kids Code, Senate Bill 571.

The digital landscape, as we know, offers boundless opportunities for learning, creativity, and connection. However, it also presents unprecedented risks to the vulnerable minds of our youth. Big Tech companies have systematically exploited these vulnerabilities for profit, employing data-driven models to ensnare our children in cycles of addiction by exposing them to the most engaging content, no matter how harmful or inappropriate.

MD Kids Code confronts these challenges head-on by prioritizing data privacy and safety through stringent data privacy impact assessments and comprehensive privacy and data protection mandates. This legislation is designed to curb the predatory practices of extracting and selling our children's personal data, thereby safeguarding them from the detrimental impacts of targeted advertising and algorithm-driven content recommendations.

As a father and school board member, I have witnessed first-hand the subtle yet profound ways in which technology can influence young minds. Our kids are suffering with increased mental health issues, severe social media addiction, and anti-social behavior due to the intentional design of social media platforms. The bill before you today is not merely regulatory—it's a protective measure for our most precious assets, our children. It mandates a fundamental shift in how technology companies operate, compelling them to innovate for safety rather than exploitation.

By supporting MD Kids Code, we can stem the tide of social media harm and ensure a safer digital environment for our children. This bill represents a vital step towards empowering our youth to develop healthy relationships with technology, fostering an online world that supports their growth and well-being rather than exploiting it.

In closing, I urge you to consider the profound impact your support for SB 571 could have on the lives of children across Maryland. Let us lead by example and demonstrate our unwavering commitment to their future. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.