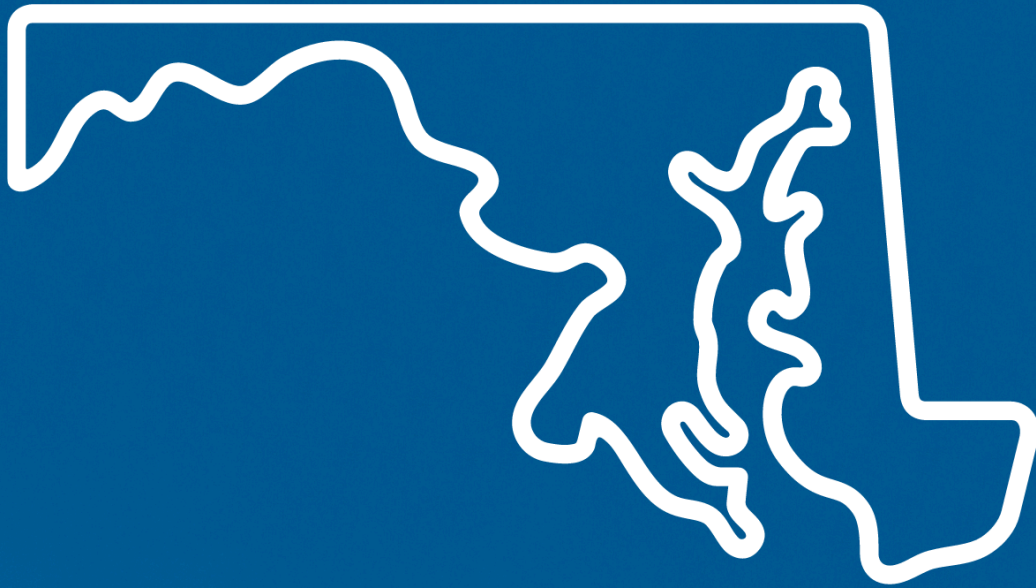


Maryland Parents



support the

Kids Code



ParentsTogether
ACTION



February 13, 2024

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

SB 571 (Sens. Kramer, Hester, and West) - Favorable

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members

Re: In support of the Age-Appropriate Design Code Act (House Bill 901)

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members,

We, the undersigned, are 196 parents, grandparents, and other Maryland residents who care about kids, and we're writing because Maryland needs the Age Appropriate Design Code Act (SB 571 (Sens. Kramer, Hester, and West)).

Families are in crisis. We're fighting every day to protect our kids from depression, cyberbullying, eating disorders, dangerous viral "challenges," exposure to drug use and to sexual predators – all of which are fueled by social media for big tech profits. These dangers have life-threatening consequences for children. Teens who spend five or more hours a day on social media are [71% more likely to have one or more risk factors for suicide](#) than those who spend less than an hour a day. That's a terrifying number when you consider that 81% of 14 to 22 year-olds said they use social media either "daily" or "almost constantly."

This constant use is by design. Social media companies engineer their products to keep kids online as much as possible – through algorithms, notifications, and endless scrolling – because it makes them money. These manipulative tactics harm users, especially the youngest and most vulnerable. Regulating the tech products our children use is way overdue. We have nutrition labels on food packaging, rigorous testing for cribs and car seats, and yet the technology most children use daily has few to no safeguards.

More than 80% of Americans say they want laws that force social media platforms to take steps to make kids safer online. We agree with President Biden, who in his State of the Union address said that "we must hold social media platforms accountable for the experiment they're conducting on our children for profit." But families can't wait for Congress to act. Maryland has the opportunity to lead the nation in protecting children online and prioritizing young people's

mental, physical, and emotional health over profits for private companies. The best way to do that is design codes.

Design codes are proven to work to protect children. The UK implemented the Age Appropriate Design Code in September 2021. Since then, tech companies have made changes to products that children use to ensure their data isn't needlessly collected and that product design is not detrimental to their health and well-being.

We believe Maryland children deserve these protections too, and we need your help getting them for our kids.

We call on Maryland lawmakers to put children's interests ahead of those of the tech industry by supporting the Age Appropriate Design Code Act, SB 571 (Sens. Kramer, Hester, and West).

Maryland Parent Experiences

Daughter suffering from depression due to social media. -Katie V, Catonsville, MD

I can't stop comparing myself to what I see on social media. My son is 9 and it affects him as well. -Erin J, New Market, MD

I nearly lost my daughter to suicide at 14. Her depression and anxiety took over her life. Her eating disorder had her hospitalized and we are blessed that she is alive now as an adult. -Joseline C, Severn, MD

My 16 year old daughter is in recovery from anorexia, anxiety, and self harm. I have no doubt that this was in no small part fueled by toxic social media. -Helen F, Takoma Park, MD

Signing for my teen, who has anxiety and depression as a result of social media. -Mashel W, Columbia, MD

Social media can lead to eating disorders. It did it to my daughter. -Ed B, Germantown, MD

My 19 year old daughter faced so much bullying and self image issues because of social media. She survived, but it was horrible. -Isaac R, MD

My daughter is currently in treatment for an eating disorder. I have seen many of these same photos and videos on her phone. We need to save our children! -Kelli M, Sparrows Point, MD

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Barbara Winner
Arnold, MD

Jane Randall
Chestertown, MD

Jerry Cohen
Columbia, MD

Rachel Kelton
Laurel, MD

Christine McComas
Woodbine, MD

Laine Malcotti
Columbia, MD

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Hagerstown, MD

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