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SB 897 – Student Technology and Social Media Resource Guide

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, members of EEE.

According to a December 2024 Pew Research Center Report, most teens use social media and have a smartphone, and nearly half say they're online almost constantly.¹ It's understandable that this situation is a source of growing concern and confusion for parents, teachers, and others. Not only is the amount of time teens and those even younger spend on technology and social media worrisome, but also the ever-evolving platforms they use are often unfamiliar to adults, particularly in terms of the potential impact on overall wellbeing, privacy, and safety.

In the absence of an existing reference tool, SB 897 addresses this knowledge gap by creating a technology and social media consumer product guide that will serve as an essential resource for parents, caregivers, educators, and others. The consumer guide will be produced by experts at the National Center for School Mental Health at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, in consultation with the Maryland State Department of Education. In easy-to-understand language, it will describe and include potential risks (when known) for products that fall into the following categories: online games, artificial intelligence, non-algorithm-driven virtual communication platforms, e-commerce platforms, smartphones, laptops, and any other products, services, or devices capable of allowing individuals to communicate through the internet.

The guide will unfold over three years: In year one, the Center will publish information on commonly used products for personal use; in year two, the Center will add information on products used for educational purposes; and, in year three, the Center will digitize the Report.

The Student Technology and Social Media Guide will be distributed through PTAs and school systems, reaching those who have or work with children and can benefit from this critical resource to make informed decisions, choices, and recommendations.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 897.

¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2024/12/12/teens-social-media-and-technology-2024/>

