

**Testimony in Support of SB 897 – Primary and Secondary Education - Student Technology and Social Media Resource Guide**

*Presented to the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee*

March 7, 2025

**FAVORABLE**

Free State PTA (FSPTA) represents over 70,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. We are here to ask for a favorable report for SB 897.

A founding principle of PTA's mission is to promote the safety and well-being of all children and youth, including their safety and well-being online. Studies have shown that most teenagers now use the internet daily, have access to digital devices and are active on social media, including over one-third who report using social media "almost constantly." Children ages 8-12 are also increasingly connected to the digital world, with nearly forty percent reporting having used social media before and almost one in five reporting they access social media daily.

Social media and other digital technology can be a driver of success, enhancing the learning experience and fostering creativity and connectedness among students, educators, families and communities. As technology advances and adapts, it is critical that families, educators, clinicians, technology industry leaders, communities and policymakers prioritize promoting a safe and positive online experience for children and youth, while also working to expand access to the technology that fosters learning and well-being. However, technology may also give rise to digital environments that can be harmful to children and youth. On social media, children and youth can become targets of cyberbullying, harassment and discrimination, predatory marketing, criminal and predatory activity, and encounter threats to the privacy of their personal information. Emerging research suggests that social media exposure may negatively impact mental health during an important developmental period and may undermine physical health and academic performance. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, studies have begun to uncover a link between social media use and increasing adolescent sleep problems and eating disorders and have shown that adolescents who spend more than 3 hours per day on social media may face double the risk of experiencing poor mental health outcomes.

All children and youth should be safe at school, at home and in their community. PTA will continue to support efforts to ensure a safe, inclusive and positive digital experience for all children, youth and families, fostering learning and healthy lifestyles and ensuring they are equipped with technological literacy and access to thrive in an increasingly digital world. This bill would establish strong safeguards to help protect children and teens when they use the internet and provide parents and guardians with critical tools to make the best decisions for navigating the digital world for their family, and therefore Free State PTA urges **the committee to make a favorable report on SB 897.**

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