

Free State PTA testimony SB897_FAVORABLE.pdf

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Position: FAV

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.**

Testimony is presented on behalf of
Gerrod Tyler, President
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SB897_MSEA_Lamb_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: FAV

FAVORABLE

Senate Bill 897

Primary and Secondary Education – Student Technology and Student Resource Guide

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

March 7, 2025

Lauren Lamb
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 897, which would require the National Center for School Mental Health at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, in consultation with the State Department of Education, to develop and publish a student technology and social media resource guide.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

As students grow up surrounded by a rapidly changing technological landscape, many are struggling with the educational and mental health consequences of extensive social media and device use.¹ Considerable research suggests that cell phone use affects focus, and the contents of adolescents' social media feeds impact their self-esteem and mental health.^{2 3} It would benefit students, families, and educators to have access to research-backed guidance on the risks of social media use and best practices for the safe and healthy use of technology, especially when provided through the lens of mental health and child development. We strongly support developing and distributing resources on this timely issue. **We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 897.**

¹ NEA's letter to social media companies. National Education Association (2021). [NEA's letter to social media companies | NEA](#)

² Youth Risk Behavior Survey: 2011-2021. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023). https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/YRBS_Data-Summary-Trends_Report2023_508.pdf

³ How can we minimize Instagram's harmful effects? American Psychological Association (2021). <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/03/feature-minimize-instagram-effects>

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Uploaded by: Leslie Margolis

Position: FAV

Education Advocacy Coalition

for Students with Disabilities

SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 897

Primary and Secondary Education - Student Technology and Social Media Resource Guide

March 7, 2025

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC) is a coalition of nearly 50 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland. The EAC supports Senate Bill 897, which will require the National Center for School Mental Health at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, in consultation with the State Department of Education, to develop and publish a student technology and social media resource guide by the 2027-2028 school year.

Technology is a ubiquitous part of life for many modern students who have been exposed to devices since they were born. However, technology, particularly social media, presents a “profound risk of harm” to youth mental health, especially for youth already experiencing poor mental health.¹ There is undoubtedly a need for support for our students about technology usage and social media. This General Assembly session, there were at least half a dozen bills attempting to ban or limit student cell phone use at school; however, “[s]imply taking away devices doesn’t lead to improved wellbeing outcomes.”² Bans alone are not effective without education on healthy technology habits. This is especially the case because even off-campus social media and technology use has the potential to affect students and school communities regardless of prohibitions during the school day. DRM has previously urged this legislature to forgo outright cell phone bans in favor of research and resource creation, such as that proposed by Senate Bill 897, which will create a Student Technology and Social Media Resource Guide. Students, teachers, and parents/caregivers need to be supported with resources and education on digital literacy, agency, and citizenship.

Engaging in research and resource creation, rather than outright bans, will also prevent any unintended harmful effects on students with disabilities, who already face significant barriers to academic and social engagement in their school environments. One goal for advocates in ensuring access for students with disabilities is identifying viable assistive technology by relying

¹ Office of the Surgeon General (OSG). Social Media and Youth Mental Health: The U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory. US Department of Health and Human Services (2023).

² [More States Are Moving to Ban Cellphones at School. Should They?](#); [What Are the Best Ways to Manage Cellphones in Schools?](#)

on the technology that students are already using. When students use existing technology such as smart phones as communication devices, organizational tools, timers, etc., they often feel more comfortable utilizing their accommodations and assistive technology. However, these students are not immune from the dangers presented by these devices and will also be well served by the creation of a technology and social media resource guide.

Authorizing the development and publication of a student technology and social media resource guide will promote healthy technology use by students with and without disabilities with the goal of creating a positive school climate.

For these reasons, the EAC supports Senate Bill 897. Contact: Leslie Seid Margolis at lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org or 443-692-2505.

Respectfully submitted,

Selene A. Almazan, Selene Almazan Law, LLC

Rene Averitt-Sanzone, The Parents' Place of Maryland

Linda Barton, MSED, Education Consultant

Beth Benevides, Autism Society of Maryland, Co-Chair, Education Advocacy Coalition

Ellen A. Callegary, Attorney (Retired)

Melanie Carlos, xMinds (Partnership for Extraordinary Minds)

Stephanie Carr, S.L. Carr Education Consultants, LLC

Rich Ceruolo, Parent

Michelle Davis, ABCs for Life Success

Beth Ann Hancock, Charting the Course, LLC

Leilani Hardy, Maryland Coalition of Families

Kalman Hettleman, Independent Advocate

Rosemary Kitzinger and Marjorie Guldán, Bright Futures, LLC

Ande Kolp, The Arc Maryland

Leslie Seid Margolis, Disability Rights Maryland, Co-Chair, Education Advocacy Coalition

Beth Nolan, MAT, Education Team Allies

Ronza Othman, National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

Rebecca Rienzi, Pathfinders for Autism

Jaime Seaton, BGS Law, LLC

Karleen Spitulnik, Decoding Dyslexia Maryland

Ronnetta Stanley, M.Ed., Loud Voices Together

Wayne Steedman, Steedman Law Group

Maureen van Stone, Kendall Eaton, Genevieve Hornik, Project HEAL at Kennedy Krieger
Institute

Mickie Chandra testimony for SB897.pdf

Uploaded by: Mickie Chandra

Position: FAV

Hearing: March 7th, 2025

Good afternoon esteemed members of the Maryland General Assembly,

My name is Mickie Chandra. Today I offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 897 based on my own experience and as an advocate for the Free State PTA.

I want to share both good news and bad news. Let's hear the bad news first.

Like many parents and caregivers in my community, I have witnessed and experienced the ugly underbelly of peer to peer social media. The risks are far greater than most of us know, and my sense is that we are not wired to automatically look for threats and take precaution when proceeding to use something that appears friendly on the surface. Social media can connect us with loved ones and provide access to creative and entertaining content. But because of the proliferation of our children's personal data across the internet and lack of advanced privacy safeguards within social media apps, our children are exposed to a highly predatory environment. It is in that environment where the most terrible cases of exploitation begin. Our children, while at school and in engaging with social media content created by those in our school communities, expose themselves unknowingly when they engage on social media platforms that do not have the necessary privacy protocols.

Until the proper guardrails are built, I ask that leaders support this bill for the creation of guidance for our primary and secondary students to more safely navigate social media. I ask that our educational institutions "think twice" before engaging with students on social media platforms. Further, in the process of creating this guidance, it is important to carefully inspect the incentives around use of social media by K-12 schools and the Ed Tech providers that serve these institutions.

Now for the good news.

We've all heard the proverbial saying that there are two sides to every story. That's true of social media. Most headlines are dominated by stories of the mental health crises, addiction, and exploitation of our children. However, social media is also an amazing connector. It is not going away, and rather, its capabilities are becoming more robust. How can we use social media to foster better connections with our loved ones, or connect with safe communities who share similar interests? Or even better, how can we use social media to access content that serves, supports, and inspires us as individuals? That is where the silver lining, and the good news, can be found. This has been my experience as well. Content that is short and sweet yet speaks "a thousand words" can go a long way to turn a bad school day around.

In conclusion, please support Senate Bill 897. Thank you for considering my testimony during deliberations of this bill.

Sincerely,
Mickie Chandra
Advocacy Committee

Free State Parent-Teacher Association

SB 897- Social Media Resource Guide - Love written

Uploaded by: Sara Love

Position: FAV

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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/>

Baur testimony SB897.pdf

Uploaded by: Cynthia Baur

Position: FWA



FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Senate Bill 897

Primary and Secondary Education- Student Technology
and Social Media Resource Guide
Hearing March 7, 2025

I encourage a **Favorable with Amendments** report on SB897 for the following reasons.

This bill provides for a practical student technology and social media guide for parents, caregivers, and students. Parents and caregivers may not be familiar with the many technologies and social media applications that students have access to, and this guide can provide valuable information in one resource.

I suggest the following amendments to maximize the value of the guide.

1. Add text at 7-2202 (C)(1) about what the guide will include as follows: promote digital literacy skills, including critical information seeking and information evaluation skills
 - a. HB1082 the Maryland Consumer Health Information Hub became law in 2022 and directs the UMD Horowitz Center for Health Literacy to “provide educational and age-appropriate resources that teach students health literacy and health literacy skills for primary and secondary schools....”
 - b. Health literacy skills include how to find and assess off-line and online information for decision making
 - c. The technology and social media resource guide should align with HB1082 primary and secondary school requirements and reinforce students’ health literacy skill development both for information seeking generally and health, safety, social services information specifically
2. Add text in the Preamble that directs the National Center for School Mental Health to collaborate also with the UMD Horowitz Center for Health Literacy and the UMD Marylanders Online program. Both organizations have significant interests in promoting and advancing parent, caregiver and student technology and social media skills.
 - a. The Horowitz Center for Health Literacy is legislatively mandated to provide health literacy resources for school aged children.
 - b. Marylanders Online is funded by the state of Maryland to promote and advance all Marylanders digital literacy skills.

Cynthia Baur
Director, Horowitz Center for Health Literacy