



Maryland House of Delegates Economic Matters Committee
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

March 10, 2026

Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding House Bill 1179.

My name is Morgan Stevens, and I represent ACT | The App Association, a global trade association for small and medium-sized technology companies and independent app developers that drive innovation, job creation, and economic growth across the country, including in the state of Maryland.

ACT and our members share your commitment to protecting children online and empowering parents with meaningful tools to manage their children's digital experiences. We take this responsibility seriously and support policies that genuinely improve online safety without unintentionally undermining privacy, innovation, or legal clarity.

However, HB 1179, as currently drafted, raises serious concerns, particularly for small app developers that do not build products or services specifically designed for or marketed to children. This can include anything from a calculator app to a local pizza place app.

First, the bill establishes broad compliance obligations that are extremely difficult to implement in practice. HB 1179 requires age verification, ongoing parental consent, and reporting app functionality changes. These requirements apply not just to large social media platforms, but to general audience apps—including those used for retail ordering, education, or basic services.

For small developers, building and maintaining these systems is costly, complex, and often unrealistic. Unlike large multinational companies, small businesses do not have compliance teams or legal departments. As a result, some developers may limit features, restrict access for Maryland users, or leave the market entirely, reducing choice and innovation for Maryland families.

Second, HB 1179 would likely increase privacy and security risks. While well-intended, the bill pushes companies to collect and store additional sensitive information to verify age and link parents to children—data they otherwise would not need. More data collection means more risk. Online safety is strengthened when companies collect less personal information, not more.

Finally, HB 1179 raises legal and constitutional concerns. Conditioning minors' access to lawful digital content on age verification and parental consent risks restricting protected

speech for minors and adults alike. These concerns are real. Late last year, a federal court blocked enforcement of a similar Texas app store age-verification law, finding it likely violated the First Amendment.

We share your goal of protecting children online. We believe that goal is best achieved through device-level parental controls, parental education, transparency, and alignment with existing federal frameworks, rather than sweeping mandates that place disproportionate burdens on small businesses.

ACT stands ready to work with Maryland lawmakers on solutions that are effective, privacy-protective, and workable for the innovators serving Maryland families.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions.

Morgan Stevens
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ACT | The App Association