



MOTION PICTURE ASSOCIATION

March 4, 2026

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama, Chair
House Economic Matters Committee
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: MD HB 1179 – Application Store Accountability Act

Dear Chair Valderrama and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Motion Picture Association, Inc. (“MPA”),¹ I am writing concerning HB 1179 (the “Bill”), a bill which would create an age verification and parental consent framework for mobile devices. MPA appreciates the concerns that bills like this aim to address, and it supports the goal of helping parents ensure their children have safe, age-appropriate experiences online. Indeed, MPA is an industry leader in providing parents the necessary tools to make informed decisions about what content their children can access—including with its gold-standard content ratings system for motion pictures.² However, the Bill as drafted is overbroad and creates cumbersome and impractical burdens on MPA members’ streaming services, and critically does nothing to differentiate between applications that have robust age verification and parental controls and those that do not. The Bill would interfere with, rather than promote, existing child safety features that are available on streaming services, and it requires app developers to request minors’ data even if the developer has determined not to make its services available to minors.

These concerns are outlined further below, and MPA welcomes the opportunity to work with legislators to address these concerns while continuing to advance the important policy interest of protecting children online.

¹ The MPA serves as the global voice and advocate of the motion picture, television, and streaming industries. It works in every corner of the globe to advance the creative industry, protect its members’ content across all screens, defend the creative and artistic freedoms of storytellers, and support innovative distribution models that expand viewing choices for audiences around the world. The MPA’s member studios are Netflix Studios, LLC; Paramount Pictures Corporation; Amazon Studios LLC; Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc.; Universal City Studios LLC; Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures; and Warner Bros. Entertainment, Inc.

² See Classification and Rating Administration, <https://www.filmratings.com/>.

I. THE BILL SHOULD DISTINGUISH SERVICES THAT ALREADY MAINTAIN AGE VERIFICATION & PARENTAL CONTROL MECHANISMS

The Bill does not limit its burdens to applications that have no internal age verification measures or which lack parental controls. Instead, *all* applications must request age and parental consent information from a third-party (an app store), even if the service is only available to adult users and/or has parental controls that permit parents to determine what content is available to their children. This one-size-fits-all approach is seeking to mitigate potential harm to children from applications that do not verify ages of their users and / or can be accessed with a free login (or no login) with no additional costs to the user or safeguards to prevent minors from accessing inappropriate content. However, this approach does not make sense for services that have direct knowledge of account holders and have spent years developing and improving protections and parental controls for their users. Notably, the Bill does nothing to require that apps create parental controls or safety features, but it creates liability for those applications that have chosen to create such mechanisms if they do not rely on the third-party signal to enforce such features. Contrary to the Bill's policy objectives, these provisions will only increase the risk of litigation to applications that are trying to do the right thing for their users via age-gating and parental controls.

MPA has an alternative framework which it believes better protects the interests of creating safer online environments for minors, and which recognizes the distinction between services that have adequate safeguards in place and those that may not. To the extent this Bill moves forward, however, MPA seeks amendments that would allow applications like streaming services to continue using their existing, established best practices. For instance, applications that require being an adult to create an account, and which have ratings to permit parents to control their children's access to content, are already satisfying the Bill's policy goals. The Bill should provide a method for developers that voluntarily undertake these measures to continue doing so without participating in a new, bespoke age verification and parental consent framework.

II. THE BILL SHOULD PERMIT SUCH DEVELOPERS TO RELY ON THEIR OWN DATA CONCERNING THEIR CUSTOMERS

The Bill requires that developers not only *request* but affirmatively *rely upon* data gathered by third-party app stores. This risks disrupting user experiences for services, like streaming platforms, that are accessed by multiple individuals within a family across many devices—and it may pose practical barriers when data received by an app store conflicts with data received directly from a customer. Once again, MPA has developed a model framework which takes into account the problem of conflicting data as well as the realities of shared devices and accounts. But absent this alternative approach, the Bill as drafted should be amended to address these concerns.

The Bill requires developers to use the age and parental consent information provided by app stores for a wide range of purposes, including implementing a developer's own age-related restrictions, safety features, and privacy settings, as well as to establish "compliance with applicable laws or regulations." This sweeping obligation could require developers to treat as fact third-party data, that the developer was not involved in collecting or verifying, to fundamentally shape a user's experience—including potentially blocking access to services and features based on the developer's

policies or other state and federal laws. This is particularly impractical as it applies to services that may be accessed on different devices by members of the same family, like a streaming service app that may be downloaded on multiple cellphones, tablets, and televisions. This Bill could require developers to reshape the user experience from one device to another, based on data received *not* from a customer but from a third-party company. In addition, the Bill does not permit a parent to override the signal sent by the third-party app store to the app. The app must rely on the third-party signal or risk being sued for violating the requirements of the Bill.

If this Bill moves forward, it should be amended to permit a developer to rely on their own customer data when offering their services, provided their data is sufficiently reliable, such as data based on a user's credit card information, and the developer chooses to do so.

III. THE BILL SHOULD PERMIT DEVELOPERS TO SET AGE GATES ON APP DOWNLOADS

Additionally, this Bill fails to provide a mechanism for a developer that has determined not to make their service available to children to avoid collecting data about minors. Under the Bill, a minor (with their parents' consent) would be permitted to download *any* application onto a mobile device, and the application developer would then be required to request the user's age and parental consent information—even if the developer did not want to make their application available to minors. The Bill should be amended to add the common-sense requirement that developers can instruct an application store to block downloads for users based on their age as determined by the app store. This will prevent the unnecessary sharing of a user's personal information—including age and parental consent data—for a service that the developer has determined will not be made available to the user.

MPA appreciates the legislature's interest in the issues raised by this Bill, and we are available to discuss alternative frameworks or amendments to the existing framework at your convenience. Please contact Renata Colbert (Renata_Colbert@motionpicturs.org), Nick Manis (nmanis@maniscanning.com), and John Favazza (jfavazza@maniscanning.com) with any questions about the Bill or MPA's proposed amendments.

Sincerely,

Renata Colbert

Renata Colbert
Director, State Government Affairs
Motion Picture Association

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