

PROTECTING KIDS ON SOCIAL MEDIA: The Harms of Social Media

UTAH STATE SENATE · SALT LAKE CITY

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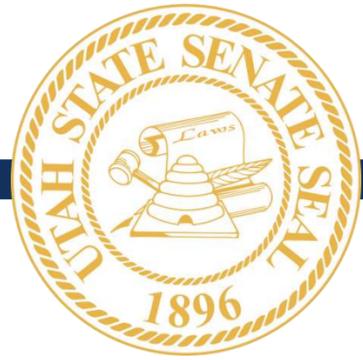
BACKGROUND

- Rates of mental health issues among youth have increased over the past two decades, correlating strongly with access to and use of social media.
- Parents need to know about the harms of social media so they can choose to take action to protect their children.
- Utah is at the forefront of holding social media companies accountable for the harms they are causing our children and young people.



The effects of social media on teens and mental health: the statistics

- 2009-2010 social media became prevalent (Utah SHARP survey)
 - Nearly all studies find a statistically significant correlation between heavy social media use (3-4 hours a day) and mood disorders
- 57% of American teen girls are persistently sad or hopeless, and nearly one in three girls seriously contemplated suicide—an increase from 19% a decade ago (CDC)
- 53% of Utah female high school students had persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness
 - 61% increase from 2009 (Utah SHARP survey)
- 100% increase in mental illness in teens from 2009 to 2019 (Jonathan Haidt)
- 3 hours a day on social media can double the risk of poor mental health, including symptoms of depression and anxiety (U.S. Surgeon General)
- Young adults who use social media are 3x as likely to suffer from depression (University of Utah Health)



BACKGROUND

WHAT DOES THE DATA SHOW?

Up to **95% of youth aged 13-17** use a social media platform, with more than a third saying they use social media **"almost constantly."**

(The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory)

When asked about the impact of social media on their **body image**, nearly half **(46%)** of youth aged 13-17 said social media makes them **feel worse** and **40%** said it makes them **feel neither better nor worse** and only **14%** said it makes them **feel better.**

(The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory)

Young adults who use social media are **3x as likely** to suffer from **depression.**

(University of Utah Health study)

Technology use within 1 hour of bedtime, and **social media use in particular**, is associated with **sleep disruptions and attention problems.**

(APA)

Parents report: **76% of Utah children** use social media in some capacity, **57%** use it 7 days a week, and **53%** use it 1-3 hours a day.

(Social Media Survey)

Mental illness in teens **increased between 50% and 150%** from 2009 to 2019.

(Jonathan Haidt)



S.B. 152: SOCIAL MEDIA REGULATION AMENDMENTS

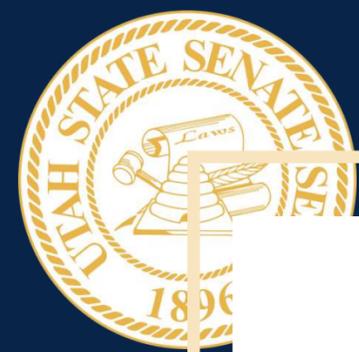
- ✓ Enacts a strict age verification process.
- ✓ Allows parents or legal guardians to set time restrictions on social media use and gives them the ability to access their child's account.
- ✓ Blocks direct messages to minors without being "friends" on the platform.
- ✓ Prevents social media companies from collecting and selling data on minors.



BIPARTISAN ISSUE

Social media companies should be held accountable “for the experiment they are running on our children for profit” – President Biden (2023 State of the Union)

S.B. 152 was a bipartisan effort in the Utah Legislature.



WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

Utah is providing parents with more tools, resources and controls to help fight against the harms of social media

Tips for Parents:

- Create a family media plan with expectations of how and when to use technology and social media.
- Learn about social media platforms and how they work.
- Have open and honest discussions with your child about the harms of social media and spending time online.
- Model responsible online behavior for your child.
- Reconsider allowing your child to have social media.
- Free up time to connect with your child device-free.
- Create tech-free zones & find opportunities to connect in person with your child.