



The Florida House of Representatives

Paul Renner
Speaker

NEWS RELEASE

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Florida Legislature Passes Landmark Legislation to Protect Minors Against Internet Dangers

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (March 6, 2024) — The Florida House of Representatives voted today to pass House Bill 3, the strongest legislation in the nation to protect minor children from addictive social media platforms and require age verification for adult online material.

House Bill 3 protects Florida's children from addictive and harmful social media platforms by prohibiting those under the age of 14 from contracting to create a social media account and empowers parents with an opt-in for their 14 and 15-year-old minor children. It also requires third-party age verification for adult websites with material harmful to minors to restrict access by minors under the age of 18.

"Today, the Florida Legislature passed the strongest legislation in the nation to keep children safe online and prevent big tech companies from using addictive features to keep them online for profit," said Speaker Paul Renner (R-Palm Coast). "The Legislature undertook a herculean effort to make this bill the strongest product possible to withstand scrutiny from Big Tech's self-serving legal challenges. I'm proud of the efforts of the bill's House sponsors, Representatives Sirois, McFarland, Rayner, Tramont, and Overdorf. Their work to protect minors and withstand constitutional challenges can become the new standard for other states to follow. This would not have been possible without Senator Erin Grall and our partners in the Senate. We also appreciate the Governor's sincere concerns that made this bill even better."

The bill is narrowly focused on the addictive features some social media platforms employ to target children which cause significant irreparable harm. This legislation uses a narrow four-prong test to focus on platforms where:

- Ten percent of daily active users are children under 16 who use the platform for two hours or more a day (which corresponds to mental health harms);
- The platform employs addictive design features;
- The platform uses an algorithm that gathers personal information about each child and delivers ever-changing content to keep them on the platform for as long as possible; and
- The platform allows users to upload content and view content posted by other users, including strangers.

Social media platforms that fall into that criteria must ensure that minors under 14 are not permitted on their platforms. But the bill allows platforms to develop their own methods for accomplishing this goal. The platforms must also adopt reasonable methods for parental opt-in for 14 and 15-year-old minors.

Websites that host adult content with material harmful to minors must provide anonymous third-party age verification methods to ensure that the user is 18 years of age. The user data must be deleted upon verification.

The bill increases subpoena powers for the attorney general to enforce the measure and outlines penalties for violations by offending social media platforms and adult websites. It also provides for private causes of action by parents on behalf of their minor children.

“Florida stands second to no one in protecting parents’ rights and the safety of our children,” said Representative Tyler Sirois (R-Merritt Island). “The research clearly reflects that social media platforms that use addictive features like infinite scrolling, push notifications, and auto-play video permanently harm a child’s developing brain when used for more than 2 hours a day. Today, we set our kids on a new trajectory to live healthier, more productive, and happier lives.”

“Social media is designed with an insidious underbelly of addiction that preys especially on the developing minds of our young people,” said Representative Fiona McFarland (R-Sarasota). “Platforms turn kids into addicts, unable to step away from their digital devices or ignore the constant stream of notifications. We will not allow platforms to work at cross purposes against parents.”

“This is a generational bill that will save lives,” said Representative Michele Rayner (D-St. Petersburg). “This is not a partisan issue. At this moment, the state of Florida is taking a bipartisan stand and saying that we will not allow social media companies to build their businesses on the backs of our children. We have no choice but to act.”

“The time for reliable, third-party age verification on adult online content is overdue,” said Representative Chase Tramont (R-Port Orange). “For too long, companies that traffic in adult content have received a wink and a nod from those entrusted to protect our kids. The safety and well-being of our kids deserve more protection than clicking a box saying you are over 18.”

“House Bill 3 gives parents assurance that their minor children will not be accessing adult content on the internet. A liquor store takes responsibility to whom they sell their product; now adult websites will have that same duty,” said Representative Toby Overdorf (R-Palm City). “I am proud of the leadership of Speaker Renner and my colleagues to make Florida a safer place for our children.”

The bill now heads to the Governor for his signature. If signed into law, the act would take effect January 1, 2025. For more information on HB 3, visit www.myfloridahouse.gov.

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