

Kids Online Safety Act S.3663



Sponsors: Chair Blumenthal (D-CT) and Ranking Member Blackburn (R-TN)

The Problem: Social media algorithms knowingly promote harmful mental health content to youth in return for boosted engagement and profits

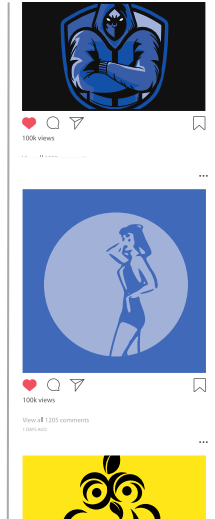
Social media platform algorithms place

extreme eating disorder, suicide, & depression content

next to

youth-targeted advertising

and serve these messages to vulnerable users to maximize engagement & spending ¹



60% of parents **never monitor their child's social media usage**, saying they lack necessary tools to do so ²

Frequent and prolonged social media use

Depressed mood & negative appearance comparison in youth

Increased risk for disordered eating ³



The Impact: Rise in youth eating disorders fueled by the pandemic



Pandemic isolation has led to **increased social media usage** and an amplified focus on the **"COVID-15" and dieting** ⁶

Doubled emergency room eating disorders visits for teen girls ⁴

Doubled eating disorder caseloads at children's hospitals ⁵

The Solution: Through existing FTC authority,



Youth and parental controls



Independent scientist access to platform data for public interest research on impacts to youth



Duty of care to protect minors

including from mental health harms, sex trafficking, and illegal products

- ✓ Independent external audits to assess compliance and risk
- ✓ Guidance and counsel provided by Kids Online Safety Council
- ✓ Enforced via FTC's *Unfair and Deceptive Practices Act* authority

Interested in cosponsoring? Email Collin_Anderson@blumenthal.senate.gov or Jamie_Susskind@blackburn.senate.gov

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Sources

1 Byrne 2021; Zhang et al 2021; Frison & Eggermont 2017; Fardouly & Vartanian 2015

2 Wilksch et al 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.23198>

3 Byrne 2021; Zhang et al 2021; Frison & Eggermont 2017; Fardouly & Vartanian 2015

4 Leeb et al 2020. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6945a3external>

5 Lin et al 2021; Otto et al 2021

6 Haripersad et al 2021; Solmi et al 2021; Branley-Bell & Talbot 2020; Castellini et al 2020; Graell et al 2020; Phillipou et al 2020; Scharmer et al 2020; Termorshuizen et al 2020