



**Testimony of Dr. Robert Keder, Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician
at Connecticut Children's, to the General Law Committee regarding
HB 6857, An Act Concerning the Attorney General's Recommendations Regarding Social Media and
Minors.**

Monday, February 10, 2025

Senator Maroney, Representative Lemar, and members of the legislature's General Law Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my support to HB 6857, An Act Concerning the Attorney General's Recommendations Regarding Social Media and Minors.

My name is Dr. Robert D. Keder, I am a Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician at Connecticut Children's. Before commenting on the bill, I want to provide some background about our organization. Connecticut Children's is a nationally recognized, 205-bed not-for-profit children's health system driving innovation in pediatrics. With over 3,200 employees and more than 1,300 pediatric experts on our medical staff, we are the only health system in the state dedicated exclusively to the care of children.

As a board-certified Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician, I have clinical expertise supporting children and their families in regards to developmental delays, language delays, autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, mood dysregulation, disruptive behavior, learning disabilities, intellectual disability, parent-child relational problems, and trauma & stressor-related disorders. I work closely with interprofessional partners including psychologists, special educators, legal advocates, and outpatient therapists to coordinate care for complex patients, and therefore understand the multiple levels of children's experiences that contribute to their health and well-being. I commonly address behavior problems related to media use with children and families. Additionally, I am an associate professor of pediatrics and teach about the effects of social media and electronic use on children and their development.

HB 6857 proposes to protect children/minors from harm that can be incurred by social media and internet use without parent/guardian consent and supervision. My current understanding of the bill is that it considers current research on the effects of social media use by minors.

Minors often spend more time online than they intend. They feel pressure to engage and find it hard to stop using platforms. This leads to problems for children and teens such as not getting a good night's sleep and displacement of other activities like physical activity, homework, or in-person activities with family or friends. In studies, minors have indicated that design features like push notifications, algorithmic feed targeting, infinite scrolling, and autoplay are mechanisms that extend their time using social media. They report that it makes them feel compelled to return to media and displace other things they intended to do (as already noted).

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) conducted a consensus study released in December 2023 (Social Media and Adolescent Health) that involved an in-depth review of published research and input from international scholars. It acknowledges that digital citizenship and digital literacy interventions are not enough to support the health and wellbeing of minors in regards to social media use. This report comments, "the complexity and pace of the online environment far exceed what adolescents - or any layperson - could be reasonably expected to understand." For this reason, we can turn to innovative design based features supported by research. Examples include: 1. batching/muting of push notifications at particular times of day (i.e. school hours and overnight hours) to prevent distraction during school hours and displacement of sleep; 2. hiding/turning off social quantification (i.e. likes and follower counts) for minors preventing potential harm through cyberbullying or in person harassment; and 3. preventing commercial profiling of minors via algorithmic data tracking which can lead to harm through targeted exposure to gambling,

sale of alcohol, cannabis & other illegal substances, as well as direct targeted marketing for in-app/in-game purchases.

It appears that HB 6857 takes all of this research into consideration. It also supports transparency for users by requiring social media platforms to publicly disclose certain information on an annual basis.

As a Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician, I wish to convey my strong support for this legislation and am thankful to have the opportunity to contribute to this process regarding this important issue of social media use by minors. I support HB 6857 as considers current research on the effects of social media on the development of children and adolescents to protect them from harm that can be incurred by social media and internet use without parent/guardian consent and supervision.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Christian Petersen, Connecticut Children's Government Relations Manager at cpetersen@connecticutchildrens.org

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