

Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA)

S. 1409, Introduced by Senators Marsha Blackburn (TN) and Richard Blumenthal (CT)

“Big Tech has proven to be incapable of appropriately protecting our children, and it’s time for Congress to step in. The bipartisan Kids Online Safety Act not only requires social media companies to make their platforms safer by default, but it provides parents with the tools they need protect their children online”

Senator Marsha Blackburn

Facts

Digital media and popular social media platforms are increasingly embedded in young people’s lives. Research shows that children under the age of 8 consume digital media for almost two and a half hours a day, and over two-thirds of 5- to 8-year-olds have their own tablet or smartphone. Teens use an average of more than seven hours of digital media — not including time spent using screens for school or homework!

Pew Research Center, July 2020, “Parenting Children in the Age of Screens”

Rideout, V., & Robb, M. B. (2020). The Common Sense census: Media use by kids age zero to eight, 2020. San Francisco, CA: Common Sense Media

Tech companies have repeatedly failed to prioritize children and teens’ online safety and wellbeing, and a tangled web of settings, defaults, and convoluted privacy policies make it impossible for families to defend against online harms on their own. The Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA) shifts responsibility for kids’ and teens’ online experiences away from families and onto Big Tech through tools, transparency requirements, and a duty of care that would require companies to assess the impact their products and features have on young users.

Key elements of KOSA include:

- Impose a duty on online platforms to prevent and mitigate specific harms, including social media addiction and the promotion of suicide, eating disorders, cyberbullying, substance abuse, and certain unlawful products
- Require companies to turn on the strongest, most privacy-protective settings by default
- Provide kids and teens the opportunity to turn off data-driven recommendation algorithms
- Empower teens to limit the ability for strangers to contact them on social media
- Create tools to help parents track screen time and spending and report emergencies to platforms
- Require large social media companies to perform annual audits to assess risks to minors



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