

My name is Marc Berkman, and I serve as the CEO of the Organization for Social Media Safety the leading national nonprofit consumer protection organization focused exclusively on social media. I would like to express our sincere appreciation to Commissioner Miller and Cook County for leading the call to support social media safety legislation pending in Congress: KOSA and COPPA 2.0.

Harms either caused or exacerbated by social media are severe, and they are pervasive.

In our own study alongside UCLA's School of Education and Information Services with over 14,000 teens, we have found that a whopping 53% self-report using social media for more than 5 hours ... daily.

That is a lot of time. And in that time, our children are being exposed to a range of threats. Here are some study findings:

- A breathtaking 46% of teens self-report being a victim of cyberbullying.
- Last year, the FBI reported 12,600 sextortion victims at least 20 of whom died by suicide.
- The more time adolescents spend on social media, the more likely they are to be exposed to drug-related content and to experiment with substance use.
- New TikTok accounts set up by a 13-year-old were recommended self-harm and eating disorder content within minutes.
- Approximately 5% of middle and high school students reported that they had been the victim of sextortion. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported a 323% increase in online enticement reports between 2021 and 2023. From October 2021 to March 2023, the FBI reported 12,600 sextortion victims at least 20 of whom died by suicide.

These studies, among many, many others, indicate real, ongoing harm from social media. We do not need to wait for more research. The conclusions are clear.

Social media executives have themselves readily acknowledged the safety concerns:

- Mark Zuckerberg of Meta, acknowledged to Congress that Meta didn't do enough to prevent their platforms from being used for harm, including a failure on data privacy.
- Shou Zi Chew of TikTok, stated that the "security, privacy, and content manipulation concerns raised about TikTok are really not unique to us. The same issues apply to the other companies."
- Jennifer Stout, VP of Global Policy with Snapchat, said "We have stepped up and have deployed proactive detection measures to get ahead of what the drug dealers are doing. They are constantly evading our tactics, not just on Snapchat but on every platform."
- And under questions from Senator Durbin about ongoing issues with grooming, child sexual abuse material, and sextortion, Discord CEO Jason Citron said, "This is an ongoing challenge for all of us."

Despite this, very, clear consensus among its leaders that severe safety risks to adolescents pervade the industry, Big Social is not taking sufficient action. And so, the harms continue, the mortality count mounts.

That is why Congress must pass COPPA 2.0, and KOSA. Congress and Illinois must also pass Sammy's Law to give caregivers the choice of using safety software to protect their children.

Given the current public health catastrophe, the daily deaths, the growing harms, we need to get to work to protect America's families.