

## The Kids Online Safety Act (S. 1409)

**Sponsor:** Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)

CHILD USA and CHILD USAdvocacy support the Kids Online Safety Act (S. 1409), a bipartisan bill enforcing online platforms to be accountable for the harms minors experience online and mandating safety mechanisms to mitigate future harm.

### About CHILD USA

CHILD USA is the leading national nonprofit think tank fighting for the civil rights of children. Our mission is to employ in-depth legal analysis and cutting-edge social science research to protect children, prevent future abuse and neglect, and bring justice to survivors. CHILD USA has engaged in amicus advocacy in both state and federal court on behalf of CSAM victims. CHILD USA's amicus briefs can be accessed here: <https://childusa.org/amicusadvocacy/>.

### About CHILD USAdvocacy

CHILD USAdvocacy is a 501(c)(4) advocacy organization dedicated to ending child abuse and neglect by advocating for better laws for child protection. We draw on the combined expertise of the nation's leading child advocates, specifically our sister organization, CHILD USA. We are committed to protecting children's civil liberties and keeping children safe from abuse and neglect.

**THE PROBLEM:** Over the past decade, the United States has experienced a youth mental health crisis like none other. Youth have experienced significant increases in mental health disorders like anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. According to the American Psychological Association, more than 20% of teens have seriously considered suicide. In 2021, the Wall Street Journal published an investigation that unearthed Meta's buried studies that showed the adverse effects of its platforms on teens. This bombshell discovery propelled social media and online usage to the center of the country's discussion around youth mental health and safety. Further, this discovery made many question the responsibility online platforms have in safeguarding their minor users from online harms.

**THE SOLUTION:** Under KOSA, online platforms, which includes social media platforms, will have a duty to prevent and mitigate harms to minors such as content promoting self-harm, suicide, eating disorders, substance abuse, and sexual exploitation. The bill will also require platforms to provide minors with options to protect their information, disable addictive ad features, and provide parents the tools to filter and monitor their child's platform usage. Further, the bill opens up "black box algorithms" by allowing academic researchers and non-profit organizations access to datasets from online platforms so they can research the online harms minor experience.

In Summary KOSA does the following:

- ❖ Creates a duty of care for online platforms.
- ❖ Promotes needed research regarding harms of online usage on children.
- ❖ Empowers parents with tools to protect their children online.
- ❖ Provides children with options to safeguard their information.
- ❖ Mandates that online platforms are transparent about the risks of harms minors face on their sites.

We urge lawmakers to pass the Kids Online Safety Act (S. 1409) to make online platforms rightly accountable for the harms their products cause to minors and to ensure a healthy and safe future for America's youth.

