



STATE OF ARKANSAS
SARAH HUCKABEE SANDERS
GOVERNOR

December 12, 2024

Dear Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Jeffries:

I am writing in support of the bipartisan Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA), a critical piece of legislation to ensure our kids' safety online. I am the Governor of Arkansas, but I am also a mom to three, and I have seen firsthand the alarming rise in mental illness among my kids' generation. In recent years, suicide rates among teens have tripled; self-harm among girls has risen by nearly 200%; and depression among teenagers has increased by 150%. The culprit is clear: unrestricted access to smartphones and social media.

Big Tech companies know their algorithms are harming kids. They have been given chance after chance to fix the problem themselves; now, it is time for lawmakers to take action. These companies are spending millions of dollars lobbying against legislation that installs commonsense safeguards on their platforms, and millions more suing states like Arkansas that take preventative steps to protect kids. It is time for a federal fix to this nationwide problem.

Dr. Jonathan Haidt, author of the bestselling book *The Anxious Generation*, has been a clear voice on this issue. I sent a copy of his book to every legislator in Arkansas and every governor in the country, hoping to spur a nationwide movement to get our kids off screens. Arkansas was the first state in the country to enact age limits on social media - though Big Tech companies are suing us and have blocked our policies in court. Last summer, our state rolled out a statewide program to give schools resources to go phone-free. Last week, I hosted Dr. Haidt over two days, touring schools, and speaking to teachers, students, and parents, and hearing about how social media and smartphones are disrupting classrooms, fueling mental health problems, and interfering with childhood development.



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The states are the laboratories of democracy, and I am proud of Arkansas' bold actions. But we need federal assistance if we expect to hold these Big Tech companies accountable. KOSA is a commonsense step in the right direction that preserves free speech rights on the internet, which explains its overwhelming 91-3 passage in the United States Senate. All this legislation does is require social media platforms to stop presenting harmful material to our kids - including posts that promote bullying, exacerbate mental illness, exploit minors sexually, and encourage suicide. It is something that any lawmaker - and any parent - should support.

America experimented with unrestricted social media use for our kids and the results of that experiment are clear: it is an unmitigated disaster. We need to reverse these alarming trends and protect kids online. I urge you to act quickly to pass KOSA before the end of the year and protect our children.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Sanders".

Sarah Huckabee Sanders
Governor of Arkansas