



June 19, 2026

To the Members of the California Senate Privacy Committee:

Design It For Us is a youth-led coalition calling for stronger protections for kids, teens, and young adults online. The Young People's Alliance is a bipartisan, youth-led nonprofit that organizes young people across the country to advocate for solutions to the most pressing challenges facing our generation. The Youth Power Project aims to break down barriers between lawmakers and youth by directly centering the stories and voices of young people in policy-making at the local, state, and federal levels.

As young people and digital natives, we urge you to oppose AB-1709 as written, which would ban Californians under age 16 from creating or maintaining social media accounts. Instead, we are urging members of the Committee to tackle this critical issue by amending AB-1709 to ban addictive features and feeds on social media for young people. These proposed changes offered by the Electronic Privacy Information Center successfully create mechanisms for real reform instead of putting a band-aid over a generational problem.

We share your goal of kids' online safety. We know well the harms of social media because we have experienced them. We want Big Tech to be held accountable, and most of all, we want to experience a safer online world. However, a ban will not accomplish this goal.

California can learn from Australia, the first country to implement a social media ban for children under the age of 16 in 2025, which has already faced significant implementation challenges. Australia's **ban has largely been ineffective** because young people value their social media accounts and find ways to stay on platforms; consequently, the ban fails to reduce online harms as intended. In Australia, [7 in 10 parents](#) whose child had a social media account before the ban say their child still has one today. In the U.S., roughly [95% of high-school-aged youth](#) use at least one social media platform, and [77% of U.S. high school students report](#) using social media several times a day. Social media is already deeply embedded in how young people communicate.

We have seen what happens when bans are implemented; people adapt. Banning minors from social media does not eliminate their desire to connect. It redirects it. For all of social media's flaws, [Pew Research Center](#) data shows that 74% of teens say social media still makes them feel more connected to their friends, and 63% say it gives them a place to show their creative side. Young people are likely to find ways around restrictions to access these benefits, and when they do, the harms that are persistent within the design of online platforms remain unaddressed. Kids may migrate to less moderated spaces, such as encrypted platforms and fringe communities, worsening online harms. And when a young person becomes of age to join social media under a ban model, the same harms are waiting for them. Consequently, **bans may actually undermine safety**.

Bans fail to address the root cause of unsafe experiences online: Big Tech's harmful business model, which enables companies to profit off the engagement of young people. Bans appear as a straightforward solution and create the false illusion that the harm has been resolved, but they reduce momentum for

genuine safety and privacy requirements online. As a result, the responsibility shifts away from Big Tech and onto families to manage risk.

Additionally, bans are likely to face significant constitutional challenges in the United States under the [First Amendment](#). To ban us from social media is to exclude our [constitutionally protected](#) voices from the very spaces where we organize around issues we care about, access information, and make ourselves heard. Further, AB-1709 would uniquely restrict the rights of young Californians, cutting us off from spaces of community that our peers in other states can continue to access, which have been especially important for [LGBTQ+ youth](#) seeking connection. Under this bill, it is young Californians, not Big Tech, who will bear the consequences.

We urge you to listen to the stories from young Californians describing their experiences:

“It's very easy to say let's ban this platform since it's harming people, but I don't think it actually changes the situation that much. It feels like our lives are designed around social media: club/school updates are on these platforms, and it's how we connect with our friends from across the country, from random places we met them. I also think just by the nature of the ban, there will start to be ways to bypass it. Currently, YouTube and Google accounts are banned until the age of 13, but when I was 8, I could easily bypass it. Bans also start to shift the blame to young people, delaying harm for the next group, then who's to say that 18-year-olds aren't important and that they're immune to the damages?”

N.K. (18), Fremont

“Legislation that bans social media usage outright is legislation set to fail. It blames young adults for the addictive, destructive features inherent in Big Tech products, shifting the consequences away from the companies directly at fault.”

B.S. (19), Berkeley

“I understand legislators are eager to deliver relief to young people, but this isn't the way to do it. When the state builds a policy around prescribing cultural norms onto a group, that policy fails, and that's what this legislation, in practice, does. The Pandora's box of social media has been opened, and suggesting that its negative contents, which have already reshaped society, can be reversed through a straightforward account ban is misguided. Instead of attempting to strong-arm existing social norms, policymakers should work around them and place the onus on tech companies to make social media less harmful: a space to chat with friends and explore ideas, shielded from the addictive design features Generation Z knows all too well.”

P.D. (20), Santa Clarita

“A social media ban limits freedom of speech without mitigating the worst impacts of these platforms. As a young queer person, I find connection and belonging in communities online. At the same time, I've had to focus so much energy on avoiding the harmful design features of social media that I don't get to enjoy my time online. The pervasiveness of misogyny, addictive features, and algorithmic bias is something built into the very nature of these platforms that should be addressed there, not at the

consumer level. The answer is not banning access. It's redesigning the platforms. A social media ban will only push this issue further down the line and further anger young constituents who feel that their representatives don't see them."

T.M. (25), San Jose

"I feel that restriction doesn't work in the long-term; we need a system change of these algorithms because it's not just young people who are suffering from social media, and I believe it's important for young people to get exposed to social media so they know how to build a proper relationship with it while they're still at home."

D.K. (21), Santa Barbara

"Banning something will only lead to practicing unsafe or unethical versions of the same thing. Prohibition reduced alcohol consumption, but led to higher illegal activity and crime. Abortion bans only lead to pregnant people deliberately putting themselves in danger because they do not have the proper care available to them. Similar to schools only providing an "abstinence only" lesson for sex ed, or schools outright banning AI use without any clarity, only harms students who will enter the workforce unprepared. Blatantly banning a service without making attempts to amend the very essence of social media being addictive refuses accountability, and this bill will allow accountability to be taken. When I was in middle school, I was taught that the internet was forever, and that something you post will never go away, and that shaped how I use social media and the Internet today. Offering similar courses, or putting out direct warnings of social media being addictive, the same as alcohol or cigarettes, or just labeling explicit music, can provide the clear knowledge for my generation that we need."

Y.S. (24), Milpitas

Social media harms are not caused by young people simply existing online. They are caused by deliberately designed products that are built to profit from our attention. This is a nuanced issue that requires a nuanced solution – one that bans do not provide. Effective legislation to reduce social media's harm will address platform design and Big Tech's business model, not restrict access. While a ban offers a fast-paced attempt to address this issue, it's worth tackling this problem through solutions that help us get this right in the long run.

That is why we are urging you to amend AB-1709 to make it possible for California to continue holding Big Tech accountable through targeted, design-based regulation. Thank you for your leadership in this work and your efforts to ensure young people are safe online.

Sincerely,

Design It For Us

Young People's Alliance

Youth Power Project