



Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, 412
Sacramento, CA 95814

July 28, 2026

Dear Chair Cervantes:

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.

Last month, we urged the Senate Privacy and Judiciary Committees to amend AB1709 from a restriction on access to social media for under-16-year-olds to a bill that addresses the addictive features driving negative engagement on social media. We are grateful that Assemblymember Lowenthal and the Committees accepted many of our proposed amendments, and we write today to voice our support for the bill's new direction, along with one final recommendation to strengthen privacy protections.

With the amendments the author has already incorporated, AB1709 now concretely addresses Big Tech's engagement-based business model, which incentivizes platforms to maximize young people's time and attention. Under the bill, covered platforms may continue to host young people, but their accounts must operate by default without addictive features. This reflects what we have been saying for years — that access and safety are not mutually exclusive. When targeted regulation is implemented, young people can continue to access vital online communities and speech while ensuring age-appropriate experiences online. By requiring social media platforms to remove addictive features for users under 16, AB1709 puts the onus on Big Tech to develop safer versions of its products, aligning more closely with young people's interests. This design-based approach tackles the root of the problem while preserving young people's ability to engage in online communities and advocacy, access educational resources, and exercise their constitutional right to expression.

We also appreciate the bill's enforcement framework. Authorizing the Attorney General, in consultation with the eSafety Advisory Commission, to adopt regulations and enforce the law through civil penalties will help ensure meaningful accountability for platforms that fail to comply. We are glad the bill allows the Attorney General to further define "addictive features" through rulemaking, so the law can adapt as platforms develop new engagement tactics.

While we support the bill, we recommend a change to the age-assurance provision. As drafted, AB1709 requires age assurance by default. We instead recommend requiring age assurance only when a user requests access to an addictive feature. Under this approach, platforms would comply by providing a non-addictive version of their service by default to all users, making age assurance necessary only when a user affirmatively chooses to enable addictive features.

This change would reduce the amount of personal information collected by platforms of its users by limiting age assurance to situations only where the user specifically requests it. It would strengthen privacy protections for all users and ensure that young people are protected from addictive product features. Users over 16 would also benefit, experiencing a non-addictive version of social media by default, with the choice to opt into these features if they wish.

We appreciate the General Assembly's willingness to work collaboratively with us to strengthen this bill, and we thank you for your leadership in the effort to keep young people safe online.

Sincerely,

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