



March 15, 2022

**Testimony of Adam Kovacevich
CEO & Founder
Chamber of Progress**

**Minnesota House of Representatives
HF 3724: Social media algorithms that target children**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee.

I'm the CEO and Founder of Chamber of Progress, a center-left tech industry association that works to ensure that all Americans benefit from technological leaps. Our corporate partners include companies like Google, Meta, and Twitter, but our partners don't have a vote or veto over our positions.

One of our organization's top priorities is to promote safe and healthy online communities – and I know this committee shares that goal. Unfortunately, while this bill is well intentioned, it would make online communities worse, not better, for kids and teens.

That's because it would remove a critical tool – algorithms – that online platforms use for promoting healthy content and for deprioritizing unhealthy content.

As a father of three school age kids myself, I share the concern that a lot of parents have about our kids being exposed to violent, destructive, or inappropriate content online.

But I also know that online platforms are using algorithms to make their services safer and healthier for kids online. For example:

- YouTube Kids is a parentally-supervised, curated experience for younger kids, which uses a combination of algorithms and manual curation to show only kid-friendly videos.

But this bill would make it impossible for YouTube Kids to use algorithms to find kid-appropriate content.

- Second, Twitter uses algorithms to help prioritize content that all of its users, including teenage users, find relevant. For example, a teenager interested in racial justice or Russia's invasion of Ukraine might follow multiple accounts or like tweets on those topics.

But this bill's ban on algorithms would prevent her from seeing tailored news on those topics.

- Third, last year Instagram announced that it would be stricter about what types of content it recommends to 13 to 18 year olds – and rolled out new settings that give teens and parents

more control over potentially upsetting content.

But this bill would likely break these tools, which rely on algorithms to sift through posts to and weed out that upsetting content.

- Finally, last October Senator Amy Klobuchar urged Instagram to take more aggressive action against posts glorifying eating disorders among teens¹. Instagram not only bans posts encouraging eating disorders;² last year it also started steering teens who are searching for disordered eating topics towards helpful support resources.

Unfortunately, Instagram's ability to remove eating disorder posts and promote helpful resources is powered by...you guessed it: the very algorithms that this bill bans.

Let me wrap by saying that we all share the goal of wanting our kids to have a better experience online. But banning algorithms is not the answer, because it's algorithms that allow online services to filter out and downrank inappropriate content, and to elevate and promote healthy content.

It would be like saying we want cleaner drinking water – but then banning the water filters that remove sediment and toxins.

Algorithms are one of the most powerful tools we have for making the Internet better for kids and teens. And because we share your goal of protecting our kids online, we respectfully urge you to oppose this bill.

¹

https://www.klobuchar.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/3/8/38d7ecc4-5d7e-4b85-ac1c-e8289822b73c/0F286AB487F0EB594E494685EFE48A77.10.13-letter-to-facebook-instagram-signed-2-.pdf

² <https://help.instagram.com/252214974954612>