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**Testimony of Tyler Smith  
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Chamber of Progress**

**California State Senate  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
A.B. 2408 Social Media addiction bill**

On behalf of Chamber of Progress, a center-left tech industry association that works to ensure that all Americans benefit from technological leaps, we write to express our concern about the potential negative impacts of **AB 2408**. Though this legislation is well-intentioned, it could inadvertently harm families that use online services to stay connected to each other and the world.

One of our organization's top priorities is to promote safe and healthy online communities – and we know this committee shares that goal. Social media, like many technologies, can be used for good or for ill, and **many leading services have taken steps to promote kids' positive use of their services**. For example:

- YouTube Kids provides a curated experience for younger kids, using a combination of algorithms and manual curation to make sure it only shows child-appropriate videos.
- Last year Instagram announced that it would roll out new settings that give teens and parents more control over upsetting content. Instagram today steers teens who are searching for disordered eating topics towards helpful support resources.
- Google's Safe Search gives parents the ability to control some of the content that kids and teens see – including filtering out explicit results like pornography, violence, and gore.
- Twitter announced Safety Mode, which temporarily blocks accounts for seven days for using potentially harmful language — such as insults or hateful remarks — or sending repetitive and uninvited replies or mentions.

These services recognize their responsibility in promoting healthy content, and positive experiences for younger users – and they have taken these steps and more to support that commitment.

While this legislation is well intentioned, it could actually worsen the experience of kids online, by threatening access to important support networks; limiting access to content that is important for

kids' health and well-being; and driving kids to services that may lack the safeguards in place on covered services.

While social media can sometimes exacerbate negative feelings, particularly among teens, the bill fails to recognize that **social media has also played a positive role in many kids' lives.**

Throughout the pandemic when many kids were confined to at-home learning, social media gave them the opportunity to connect with friends, relatives, and teachers. Social media helped kids express themselves during the Black Lives Matter movement and the 2020 election. Teens who are marginalized or bullied at school often find affirming, sanctuary communities online. These support networks have provided vital support to kids over the last few challenging years. What this bill characterizes as "social media addiction" could be viewed instead by some teens as their social and mental health lifeline.

**By increasing platform legal liability for content online, the bill could prompt services to crack down on the availability of content that could play a positive role for kids and teens** – such as positive information about healthy eating, education about race relations and social justice, and information on gun safety.

While this warning may seem dire, we have seen that other efforts to increase liability for online platforms – like the federal Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act of 2018 (FOSTA) – have resulted in platforms taking an overbroad approach to content removal and blocking in order to avoid harmful litigation. Increasing liability will cause platforms to sanitize their content to allow only a Disney-like experience of heavily curated content.

Finally, while large social media companies have done essential work to make safer spaces for kids and teens – and devote millions of dollars each year to online content moderation – smaller services have not. Because this legislation only applies to services with more than \$100 million in annual revenue, **this legislation could end up driving kids away from big platforms and move instead to smaller, less responsible platforms not covered by this bill**, such as Signal. Furthermore, the bill's exemption for encrypted messaging apps may make it even more difficult for parents to have visibility into what their children do online.

Overall, the bill's restrictions could end up driving kids away from the very services that have invested the most resources in protecting their youngest users.

We share your goal of protecting kids online, yet we worry that this bill would expose kids to a more unsafe environment and reduce kids' ability to communicate, share, and connect with each other and the broader world. . We agree that unhealthy content for kids is a real problem, and we'd like to work with the committee on a more targeted approach than AB 2408 that aims at the harms of social media while also preserving its vital benefits. Thank you.