



May 24, 2024

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor
New York State
New York State Capitol Building,
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Letitia James
Attorney General
New York State
State Capitol, Albany
NY 12224-03

The Honorable Crystal Peoples-Stokes
Assembly Majority Leader
New York State Assembly
Room 926, Legislative Office Building
188 State Street
Albany, NY 12248

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
President Pro Tempore; Majority Leader
New York State Senate
Room 907, Legislative Office Building
188 State Street
Albany, NY 1224

The Honorable Carl Heastie
Speaker of the Assembly
New York State Assembly
Room 932, Legislative Office Building
188 State Street
Albany, NY 12248

The Honorable Michael Gianaris
Senate Deputy Majority Leader
New York State Assembly
Room 427, State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12247

Re: A8148/S.7694

Dear Governor Hochul, Attorney General James, Leader Peoples-Stokes, Leader Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Heastie, and Deputy Leader Gianaris:

There continues to be a significant amount of discussion about the Stop Addictive Feeds Exploitation (SAFE) for Kids Act (SB A8148/S.7694), which would prohibit online services from offering teenagers algorithmically-curated feeds by default.

Because of our concern that this legislation would make online services more toxic and less healthy for teenagers, we wanted to draw your attention to a [new survey of teenagers](#) released this week by Common Sense Media.¹ The survey shows clearly that

¹https://www.common sense media.org/sites/default/files/research/report/2024-double-edged-sword-hopela-b-report_final-release-for-web-v2.pdf

teenagers value and want exactly the kind of algorithmic feed curation that the SAFE for Kids Act would prohibit.

Although these bills aim to keep minors safe, they may end up harming at-risk teens and invading their privacy by banning the use of algorithms in teens' digital media feeds, including algorithms that filter out hate speech and harassment. Algorithms are essential for curating social media feeds as they process data, analyze behavior, and automatically prioritize content to tailor the feed to individual preferences.

In fact, Common Sense Media's own research shows that teenagers rely on curated feeds to maintain positive online experiences.

Common Sense Media findings:

Teens want beneficial algorithmic curation for social media feeds

Earlier this week, Common Sense Media released results of a survey of 1,274 teenagers and young adults, age 14 to 22, conducted late last year with oversampling of LGBTQ+, Black, and Latino respondents.² The survey found teenagers overwhelmingly valued algorithmically-curated feeds in their social media services:

- 76% of social media users aged 14 to 22 used tools to control content they did not want to see in their feeds.
- 67% of teenagers said that, over the last year, they had attempted to "curate their feed" by liking or spending more time on certain content to see more of what interests them.
- LGBTQ+ young people were significantly more likely to curate their feeds to improve their experience. 89% of LGBTQ+ youth social media users said that, over the past year, they have tried to avoid content they don't like on these platforms, compared to just under three-fourths of non-LGBTQ+ social media users (74%).
- LGBTQ+ youth were also significantly more likely (78%) to have tried to tailor their feed to better align with their interests vs. non-LGBTQ+ youth (65%).
- 90% of teenagers with moderate to severe depressive symptoms had tried to see less of what they do not like on social media, versus 67% of those with no symptoms.

²https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/double-edged-sword-how-diverse-communities-of-young-people-think-about-social-media-and-mental-health?j=9664249&sfmc_sub=232043373&l=4953157_HTML&u=235541285&mid=6409703&jb=5046&utm_source=advocacy_hopelab_research_20240521&utm_medium=email

- 81% of youth with moderate to severe depressive symptoms had taken actions to try to curate their social media feed, compared to 55% of those with no symptoms.

All of these examples of curation - which a large majority of teenagers told Common Sense Media they rely on for healthier feeds - would be banned by the SAFE for Kids Act.

As Common Sense Media's report concludes, "The data suggests that young people experience both distressing and affirming content online, and that they take steps to both avoid content they dislike and curate their feed to see more of what interests them."

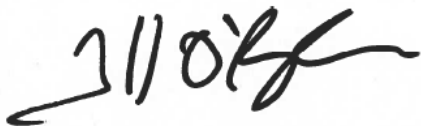
Common Sense Media is among the supporters of the SAFE for Kids Act - but its own survey of teenagers found broad support for the algorithmically-curated feeds that the legislation would prohibit.

We agree that young people's mental health is important. But **teenagers themselves are saying that this legislation would make social media feeds worse for them, not better.**

It is crucial that policymakers not deny young people the ability to curate their social media feeds to promote positive mental health and protect themselves from harmful content.

For these reasons we urge you to **oppose SB A8148/S.7694.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd O'Boyle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Todd O'Boyle
Senior Director, Technology Policy
Chamber of Progress