

APP STORE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

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THE PROBLEM

American children are facing a civilizational crisis due to the harms fomented by digital devices and services. The evidence is overwhelming:

- **56%** of 13 to 17-year-olds had Mind Health Quotient (MHQ) scores in the distressed or struggling range, compared with 20% for their adult counterparts.
- **51%** of American children report being detached from reality, with more than half acknowledging that constant feelings of sadness, guilt, fear, and anxiety cause serious problems in everyday life.
- Feelings of anger, irritability, aggression, and debilitating hallucinations were found in much higher concentrations in 13-year-olds compared to their older counterparts.

As revealed by the now infamous Facebook Files, social media companies and other digital service providers employ a strategy of addiction, targeting children and teens for as long as possible to scrape every morsel of sensitive information they can.

Consider these alarming statistics:

- Children ages 8 to 12 in the United States spend **4 to 6 hours a day** watching or using screens.
- Teens spend up to **9 hours daily** on screens.
- Nearly all teens (**95%**) report having access to a smartphone, up from 73% in 2014-2015.
- The share of teens reporting being online “almost constantly” has roughly doubled since 2014-2015 (46% vs. 24%).

TEXAS PARENTS WANT CHANGE

Recent polling by the Texas Public Policy Foundation shows overwhelming support for action:

- **75%** of Texas voters support requiring app stores to get parental approval for teens to download apps.
- **79%** of Texas parents specifically support such requirements.
- **88%** of Texas Republican voters support these measures.

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THE SOLUTION

The App Store Accountability Act (SB 2420 by Senator Angela Paxton and HB 4901 by Representative Caroline Fairly) extends the framework established by previous state-level laws and proven safeguards aimed at protecting children from harmful digital products.

WHAT THE LEGISLATION DOES

The App Store Accountability Act would:

- **Require robust age verification** when creating an account with an app store using a commercially reasonable method. App stores would categorize users as: child (younger than 13), younger teenager (13 to 16), older teenager (16 to 18), and adults (over 18).
- **Mandate parental oversight** by requiring minor accounts to be affiliated with that of a parent or guardian, empowering parents to provide consent for app downloads or in-app purchases.
- **Ensure accurate age ratings** on individual apps as they relate to the newly established age categories.
- **Establish strong data privacy standards**, including data minimization, deletion of personal data used to verify age, and enhanced security for any personal information transmitted.
- **Create accountability** by making failures to meet these requirements a deceptive trade practice, enforceable by the Texas attorney general.

Interested in learning more about
the App Store Accountability Act?
Scan the QR code here to access
our latest research.

