What does the Kids Online Safety and Privacy Act (KOSPA) do? KOSPA:

- requires social media and gaming companies to design their platforms to prioritize children's and teens' safety and privacy over engagement and profits
- forces companies to change design features that maximize engagement, often at the cost of children's well-being
- shifts the responsibility onto platforms to be more transparent by identifying and mitigating their potential harms to minors
- gives minors and parents more meaningful controls over their social media use
- extends privacy protections to teenagers
- minimizes the data collected on minors and bans targeted advertising to minors
- continues to allow all kids to use the internet for community, education, and entertainment

Why do we need KOSPA? Our youth are facing a mental health crisis, and the monetization of our youth by social media platforms, and constant online tracking and targeting, contributes to this crisis. Children are uniquely vulnerable to online harms. Our research, AdTech and Kids: Behavioral Ads Need a Time-Out, shows that most kids cannot distinguish an ad from content until they are at least 8 years old, and most children do not realize that ads can be customized to them. Children and teens are also prone to sharing without fully understanding the consequences. This enables businesses to manipulate kids and teens without them even realizing they are being manipulated.

Overcollection of data contributes to this harm. According to research from SuperAwesome, by the time a child is 13, over 72 million pieces of personal data will have been captured about them. Tech companies use this data to serve up algorithmic recommendations that drive addictive and harmful content, including posts promoting eating disorders and self-harm, to young users with extreme precision to increase their engagement. Stronger data privacy protections for minors is the first step toward making the internet healthier and safer for young users.

Intentionally manipulative social media and gaming platform design also contributes to this harm. According to the U.S. surgeon general, up to 95% of youth age 13–17 report using social media, with more than a third saying they use social media "almost constantly." Social media companies use manipulative design features, like personally tailored and targeted feeds ("personalized recommendation systems"), push notifications, endless scrolling, autoplay of videos, and dark patterns, to get kids and teens to view and engage with platforms longer to make more money.

Our research, Constant Companion: A Week in the Life of a Young Person's Smartphone Use, shows that kids and teens are struggling to set their own boundaries when it comes to social media because of harmful design features. These features have had an increasingly devastating effect on our youth, contributing to significantly higher rates of youth depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and self-harm.
The recently released White House Kids Online Health and Safety Task Force report identified that despite the potential benefits to the well-being of our youth, there is also significant risk of harm to our youth from excessive and problematic social media and digital technology use and invasive and intrusive collection of data. The report found that, "The structures and functions of online platforms are the result of specific design choices, including, in many cases, choices to collect and use data about people for commercial purposes, maximize how much time people spend online, and target users with commercial and non-commercial content. These trends are concerning for all users but pose a distinct threat to youth."

What specific online harms does KOSPA require social media platforms to mitigate?
- Suicide, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, substance use disorders, and sexual exploitation and abuse
- Patterns of use that indicate or encourage addiction-like behavior
- Physical violence, online bullying, or harassment of a minor
- Promotion and marketing of narcotic drugs, tobacco products, gambling, and alcohol
- Predatory, unfair, or deceptive marketing practices, and other financial harms

What safeguards and controls does KOSPA give children, teens, and parents?
Under KOSPA, companies must minimize the amount of data collected from minors and require opt-in consent from teens or parents of young children under age 13 before data is collected. It bans targeted advertising for all users under the age of 17. And companies won't be able to turn a blind eye to young people on their sites and fail to offer required privacy protections, the way many sites do today.

KOSPA also requires platforms to enable the strongest privacy and safety settings by default. Minors can limit strangers from contacting them online, prevent others from viewing their information, opt out of manipulative design features (including personalized recommendation systems), and restrict the sharing of their location. Parents can control these settings for young children under 13, and view the settings—but not the content—for teens 13 to 16. Parents can also restrict financial transactions and time spent on a platform.

KOSPA also gives parents and minors an easy-to-use mechanism to submit reports to platforms when a minor is being, or has been, harmed by the platform.

What does KOSPA NOT do? KOSPA does not:
- allow state attorneys general to enforce prevention of or define harms to minors
- require companies to take down or block specific content
- prevent users from searching for any content or communicating with any friends or online communities they are interested in
- endanger personal data or require companies to collect more data than they already collect from their users
- eliminate ad-supported content, or provide parents with special access to their kids' content

Vote Yes for Kids & Teens - Vote Yes on KOSPA