

LD 844 Testimony

03/16/2025

Members of the Committee,

I am Magili Chapman Quinn, DO, a resident of Scarborough, ME and a Family Physician. I am also the parent of two daughters, 12 and 15 years old who are students in Scarborough Public School system.

I am writing to testify in support of the LD 844 “An Act To Regulate Social Media Use by Minors Under 16 Years of Age”. I think this legislation would improve our ability as parents and adults in the community to monitor and avoid the monetization of our children’s attention. This is the express goal of social media companies and they are extremely skilled at achieving their goal, to the significant detriment of our children’s minds and lives.

As noted in “The Anxious Generation” by Jonathan Haight incidence of teenage depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide have doubled in the time since the smart phone has been introduced. Haight identifies the following contributors of social media use to this rise:

- **Social comparison and social contagion:** Constant exposure to curated online lives can lead to feelings of inadequacy and negativity.
- **Sleep deprivation and attention fragmentation:** Excessive screen time disrupts sleep patterns and makes it harder to focus.
- **Addiction:** Smartphones and social media are highly addictive, leading to escapism and a decline in real-world engagement.
- **Loneliness:** While social media can connect people, it can also lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Haight’s frame of an overall movement from a play-based childhood to a phone-based is accurate. The effect it is having on the neurological development of our children is extensive and this will eventually lead to a vast cultural shift away from empathy, compassion, care for community and social cohesion. Some of this has already taken hold, in the way our social discourse has become divided by adult use of social media and technology.

It is our responsibility as adults and parents to respond to this epidemic of social media use in our children. Our children do not have the cognitive maturity to regulate their use themselves. This act would provide an automatic assistance to parents to be informed of their children’s engagement and to be involved in choices to engage. It would flag parents who may not be aware of the detriments of social media, that there is something to be concerned about. The need for consent would create a cultural norm, not unlike a “rated X” or “TV-MA” warning to flag

content that is too mature for younger viewers, and this norm would serve to support parents in limiting their children's use. Such a norm does not exist today so the onus lies on individual parents to constantly fight the argument from their teens "everyone is doing it". (I know from the almost daily battles I have with my kids.) The legal recourse would allow parents actual ways to hold social media companies accountable.

The 2024 report from the Surgeon general (link here: <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/parents-under-pressure.pdf>) flags that parents are under unprecedented amounts of stress today and this is affecting their ability to be present for their kids.. This legislation would provide a much needed scaffolding to allow for more smooth navigation of their children's introduction to social media in a developmentally appropriate manner.

Thank you for considering this testimony in your process. I do hope you, as a committee, recommend passing this legislation.

Sincerely,

Magili Chapman Quinn, DO