

To the Judiciary Committee:

I'm writing as a Maine parent in support of **LD 844: An Act to Regulate Social Media Use by Minors...**

As anyone who was young once knows, tweens and adolescents are some of humanity's most motivated and creative problem solvers. There is no amount of "good parenting" that can fully protect our kids from the harmful, sometimes life-threatening content and effects of social media and its bad actors—or the addictive-by-design nature of these platforms.

Social media companies are not incentivized to raise age limits on their users as that would eat into the profits from their most prized advertising base: Children. The earlier big tech gains access to a child, the more money these companies can make on kids across their lifetimes. A recent [Harvard study of social media users under 18](#) shows that **Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X, and YouTube generated nearly \$11 billion in ad revenue from minors in 2022: \$2.1 billion from users ages 12 and under and \$8.6 billion from users ages 13-17.** The numbers are almost certainly higher today.

**And this is why the committee will undoubtedly hear from out-of-state lobbyists on this issue: It's about profit; at the emotional, social, physical, intellectual and even spiritual expense of our children.**

Recently, a Maine detective told me two disturbing stories from my own town: A girl groomed via social media to participate in her own trafficking and a teen boy who used SnapChat to purchase alcohol—*that was then driven to his own home by a stranger*—and which he drank alone, to the point of poisoning.

I urge the committee to refer to the vast library of resources, research and news articles hosted by the nonprofit [Becca Schmill Foundation](#) for more on the wide array of issues related to the predatory practices of social media companies and the chilling fallout for our most vulnerable internet users. The foundation, based in Massachusetts, was formed by the family of Becca Mann Schmill, who passed away in 2020, from fentanyl poisoning. Becca accessed the drugs with the assistance of a social media platform.

Admittedly, this legislation is only one layer of protection. And we will need many to deal with these massive issues. As we all know, the internet is an anonymized, lawless version of the real world with few boundaries and lots of tools for bad actors to access impressionable young people; young people who are still developing their social wits, intuition, critical thinking and knowledge of the world; young people who are motivated to explore or push boundaries by the very qualities that make kids great: Curiosity, interest in self-discovery, and a strong desire for social connection.

LD 844 is equivalent to installing bouncers outside of a massive latenight warehouse party, a checkpoint to turn children away from whatever iniquity awaits inside. But you can be sure there are still adults opening back doors, inviting in kids and teens with promises of fun, feeling cool, taking risks, or looking their best. And it's the social media companies driving them to this party, whether parents know or not.

Still: A checkpoint for age verification, and an option for parents to give permission to their 14 and 15 year olds to participate, is better than what we have now. I thank Rep. Fredette for taking an interest and raising awareness on this important topic—one that ultimately affects us all.

Sincerely,

Chelsea DeLorme, M.Ed.