MAINE
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

February 17, 2026

Senator Donna Bailey
Representative Kristi Michele Mathieson
and the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: LD 2162 An Act to Regulate and Prevent Children's Access to Artificial Intelligence Chatbots with Human-like Features and Social Artificial Intelligence Companions

Dear Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services,

I write on behalf of the Maine Psychological Association (MePA), in support of LD 2162 An Act to Regulate and Prevent Children's Access to Artificial Intelligence Chatbots with Human-like Features and Social Artificial Intelligence Companions presented by Representative Gramlich of Old Orchard Beach and cosponsored by Senator Bailey of York and Representatives Brennan of Portland, Speaker Fecteau of Biddeford, Foley of Wells, Mathieson of Kittery, Moonen of Portland, Sachs of Freeport and Senator Pierce of Cumberland.

My name is Stacy Whitcomb-Smith and I am the current president of The Maine Psychological Association (MePA). MePA is a non-profit association which represents the 600+ psychologists and psychological examiners in Maine. Our mission is to advance psychology as a science, as a profession, and as a means of promoting human welfare. Our membership consists of practicing psychologists, academicians, students, retirees, associates, and affiliates.

MePA supports LD 2162 for its thoughtful approach to protecting children from risks of certain types of generative AI (i.e., chatbots). During childhood there are several critical periods of brain development, making it important for us to safeguard children from new technologies that have the potential for harm. Children may be unaware when they are using AI or AI-assisted technology and are unlikely to possess the knowledge and perspective to understand how AI could impact them. AI can produce inaccurate but persuasive information and contains biases children may not detect or understand.

In particular, adolescents may not be able to discern between simulated empathy of an AI chatbot and genuine human understanding. Youth are likely to have heightened trust in, and therefore susceptibility to, influence from AI-generated characters. This appears to be particularly true for chatbots that present themselves as friends or mentors.

In addition, children's relationships with AI entities may take the place of or interfere with the development of healthy real-world relationships. Children's use of chatbots carry the risk of producing unhealthy relationships, interrupting social skills development and preventing the development of healthy emotional connections.

Rather than prohibiting the use of AI, this regulation allows for use in controlled, monitored situations with ethical implementation, training standards, informed consent, and clear guidelines to ensure safe, effective, and responsible application within the existing ethical and regulatory framework governing licensed psychologists.

The American Psychological Association (APA) supports policy to protect children and especially adolescents from potential harms of generative AI:

https://www.apa.org/topics/artificial-intelligence-machine-learning/health-advisory-ai-adolescent-well-being

https://www.apaservices.org/advocacy/news/chatbots-testimony

It is for these reasons that we support LD2162 to put safeguards in place to protect children from the potential of exploitation or developmental harm resulting from unchecked access to generative AI chatbots.

We encourage you to vote for this piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Stacy Whitcomb-Smith, PhD
Psychologist and President, Maine Psychological Association