

Wendy Fenderson  
Limerick  
LD 2162

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Testimony in Opposition to LD 2162

Senator, Representative, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in opposition to LD 2162.

Protecting children is one of the most important responsibilities we share as a society. However, this bill represents a significant expansion of state authority into areas that properly belong to parents and families.

LD 2162 would require age verification before accessing artificial intelligence tools. In practice, that means government-mandated identity verification systems — potentially including driver's license uploads, third-party verification services, or other digital tracking mechanisms. That raises serious privacy concerns not just for minors, but for all Maine citizens.

Parents already have tools and authority to manage their children's digital lives. We control devices. We set screen limits. We monitor usage. We decide what is appropriate for our own children based on their maturity and circumstances. Shifting that responsibility to state-mandated identity verification moves decision-making power away from families and toward government regulators.

This bill also creates practical and constitutional concerns. Artificial intelligence tools function as interactive speech systems. Restricting access through broad age-verification requirements risks burdening lawful speech and raises significant First Amendment concerns.

If young people are turning to AI for companionship or emotional support, that signals deeper societal challenges — including social isolation and limited access to affordable mental health services. Restricting access to technology does not solve those root problems. It regulates the symptom rather than addressing the cause.

We must be cautious about expanding digital identification requirements in the name of safety. Once identity verification frameworks are built, they rarely shrink — they expand.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to reject LD 2162 and instead focus on policies that strengthen families, improve access to real mental health resources, and preserve parental authority.

Thank you for your consideration.