



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. I am Kenneth Fredette and I represent District 33 which includes the towns of Dixmont, Etna, Newport, Plymouth and Corinna.

I am here as the sponsor of **LD 844: An Act to Regulate Social Media Use by Minors Under 16 Years of Age**, a bill aimed at safeguarding the mental health and well-being of Maine's youngest residents.

This legislation is modeled after a similar bill passed in **Florida**, which recognized the growing body of evidence linking early exposure to social media with **increased rates of anxiety, depression, and online exploitation** among children. It is designed to **empower parents, protect children, and create healthier online habits** for our youth.

Clearly we all live in a digital age where social media platforms are **engineered to maximize screen time, foster addictive behaviors, and expose children to harmful content**. Research has shown that:

- **Children under 14 are more vulnerable** to social media's negative psychological effects, including **self-esteem issues, cyberbullying, and online predators**.
- The **U.S. Surgeon General has warned** about the dangers of social media on adolescent mental health.
- **Tech companies have failed** to provide meaningful protections for young users, instead prioritizing engagement and profit over safety.

This bill establishes a **clear, enforceable age limit** of 14 for social media use in Maine, ensuring that children are not prematurely exposed to platforms designed for adult-level engagement.

The goals of this bill are to:

- **Prohibit social media companies from allowing accounts for users under 14.**
- **Requires age verification** for new accounts, holding platforms accountable for enforcement.
- **Empowers parents** by ensuring they have control over when and how their children engage with social media.

This bill does not seek to:

- **Prevent children from accessing educational or age-appropriate digital content.**
- **Nor does it infringe on parental rights**, but rather **supports parents** in protecting their children.

Much like laws that **set minimum ages for driving, drinking, and working**, we must ensure our children are developmentally prepared to navigate the digital world safely.

In closing, I urge my colleagues to support **LD 844** for the **mental health, safety, and future well-being of our children.**

Thank you and I will be happy answer any questions you have.