



Chairman Stewart & members of the Ohio House Finance Committee, thank you for letting me speak today. My name is Katie DeLand, and I am here for Ohio Women Lead Right, an organization dedicated to empowering women, promoting family values and protecting children across our great state.

I'm here today to ask you to put provisions in the state budget that would require parental approval and age verification measures for social media applications at the app store level. This would make it much easier for parents like us to protect our kids when they are online.

As mothers, grandmothers, and concerned citizens, our organization knows that social media has both many positive and negative sides for young people. While it can help with education and connecting with others, it also has challenges that kids handle differently depending on their age. We believe parents should be the ones deciding when their children are ready for various social media platforms, not the government or big tech companies.

The current system of having to check ages and get parental permission on each individual app is confusing, hard to use, and does not work well. It leaves kids vulnerable to harm online, while making parents struggle to figure out dozens of different platforms and settings. Fortunately, there's a straightforward solution.

Requiring parental approval through the app store is the most effective way to keep our children safe online. Instead of making parents verify their child's age on countless individual platforms, this approach puts everything in one place where the apps are downloaded.

App stores already have the tools to do this. Both Apple and Google have age verification systems and ways to link family accounts. These companies have already shown they can handle parental approval for in-app purchases. Extending this to app downloads for users under 16 makes sense and isn't hard to implement.

This solution offers several benefits to families in our state:

Parents would approve app downloads just once at the app store level, instead of trying to figure out settings across many different platforms.

By verifying age through the app store, we reduce the need for children to provide sensitive personal information to numerous apps and websites. This approach centralizes sensitive

verification data in one place where strong privacy protection safeguards already exist, rather than spreading it across countless platforms with varying security standards.

This approach respects the basic right of parents to guide their children's online experiences while giving them the tools they need to do so effectively.

All platforms would have to follow the same standard, creating consistent safeguards no matter which apps children use.

Members of the House Finance Committee, we believe in limited effective government that empowers families. This proposal does just that. It gives parents a streamlined tool without creating complicated regulations or compromising privacy.

Ohio has the chance to lead on this issue by implementing a practical solution that makes navigating today's digital world easier. I strongly urge you to include app store age verification and parental approval requirements in this year's budget.

Our children are our most precious resource and greatest responsibility. Let's give Ohio parents the tools they need to protect them online.

Thank you for your time and consideration.