



Chairman Thomas, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Isaacsohn & members of the Ohio House Judiciary Committee, thank you for letting me speak today. My name is Katie DeLand, and I helped found Ohio Women Lead Right, an organization dedicated to empowering women, Members of the House Judiciary Committee, thank you for considering my testimony today.

This is my second time testifying on this important issue. I am writing to ask you to support House Bill 226, which would require parental approval and age verification measures for social media applications at the app store level. This would make it much easier for moms like us to protect our kids when they are online.

Since I last testified, we now have clear evidence that Ohio parents overwhelmingly want this solution. A recent statewide poll by the Tarrance Group of 700 registered voters who are parents shows that 80% of Ohio parents support a law requiring app stores to obtain parental approval before children can download apps.

The support is particularly strong among Republicans, with 85% of Republican parents backing this approach. This shows that conservative families in Ohio recognize the need for practical tools to help moms and dads protect their children in the digital age.

As mothers, grandmothers, and concerned citizens, our organization knows that social media has good and bad 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. The poll shows that 72% of Ohio parents say it would be easier to provide approval in one place such as an app store, while only 22% say it would be easier separately through each app.

This tells us that parents instinctively understand there is a better way. 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 makes sense and is not hard to implement.

This solution offers several benefits that align with what Ohio parents are asking for. Parents would approve app downloads just once at the app store level, instead of trying to figure out settings across many different platforms - the system parents prefer.

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.

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 pass House Bill 226 to give Ohio parents what they are clearly asking for. Our children are our most precious resource and greatest responsibility. Let's give Ohio parents the tools they need to protect them online - tools that 80% of them are telling us they want.

Thank you for your time and consideration.