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Contact Communications

Phone (850) 245-0150

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General James Uthmeier Proposes Legislation to Hold Big Tech Criminally Accountable When AI Chatbots Participate in Criminal Activity



Courtesy of the Office of the Attorney General

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Attorney General James Uthmeier proposed legislation to hold companies that own, control, or distribute artificial intelligence chatbots responsible when those systems participate in criminal activity.

“AI is not a silent tool. It answers the questions, picks the hour, chooses the place, and walks someone through the plan,” **said Attorney General James Uthmeier.** “When a product participates in a crime like that, the company that built it is not a bystander. A chatbot cannot be charged, but the corporation that designed it, trained it, and collected the subscription can.”

“Artificial intelligence presents enormous opportunities, but its misuse is creating serious harm,” **said FDLE Commissioner Mark Glass.** “Child sexual abuse material is dangerous and deeply damaging, even when fabricated. AI generated child sexual assault material can delay investigations, creates new pathways for exploitation, and can devastate real children and

families. By staying vigilant and protecting our children, we can ensure AI is used to strengthen our communities, not harm them."

The proposal follows a first-in-the-nation, state-led civil lawsuit Florida filed on June 1, 2026, against OpenAI and its Chief Executive Officer, Sam Altman, alleging the company marketed ChatGPT as safe while ignoring internal warnings, deceiving parents, and putting children at risk. A civil case can force a company to pay and change its product, but it cannot treat that company like a co-defendant in a homicide. The legislation is designed to close that gap.

In April, the Office of Statewide Prosecution launched a criminal investigation into OpenAI and ChatGPT after prosecutors reviewed chat logs between ChatGPT and Phoenix Ikner, the accused gunman in the April 17, 2025, shooting at Florida State University. Two people were killed—Robert Morales and Tiru Chabba, fathers who worked on that campus—and six other people were shot.

Investigators determined the accused planned the attack with ChatGPT, which advised him on the type of gun, the ammunition, whether a firearm would work at short range, what time of day would put him in front of the most people, and where on campus that would be. ChatGPT told him the student union was busiest between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. He opened fire in that window. The criminal investigation is ongoing.

The Attorney General later expanded that investigation after the suspect in the murders of two University of South Florida doctoral students, Zamil Limon and Nahida Bristy, used ChatGPT in the days surrounding those killings. Court records reflect the suspect asked the chatbot how to dispose of a human body, whether he could keep a gun at home, and whether neighbors would hear a gunshot.

Florida has already acted against people who use artificial intelligence to exploit children. A Florida teacher used AI to create sexual abuse images of children. Prosecutors secured a 135-year prison sentence in that case. In March 2026, Attorney General Uthmeier joined Governor Ron DeSantis for the signing of HB 1159, which raised the penalty for creating AI-generated CSAM to a second-degree felony.

The legislation would:

1. Hold corporations responsible. A business entity that owns, controls, or distributes an AI system is liable if that system participates in a crime.

2. Judge AI by its words and actions. An AI system is not a person, but it is Responsibility falls on those who own it, control it, distribute it, and profit from it.

3. Cover any company with practical control over design, training, deployment, or safety settings, including making the system available to Florida users.

4. Impose consequences that mean something. A convicted business would face heavy fines, payment to victims, and court-ordered monitorship.

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