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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Urges TikTok and Snapchat to Strengthen Parental Controls



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody, and a bipartisan coalition of 43 attorneys general, sent a letter to TikTok and Snapchat this week urging the companies to give parents the ability to monitor a child's social media usage to protect children from online threats using parental control applications and features.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "The internet is a dangerous place for children to explore without any guidance or protection. As a mother, I worry about what my child may encounter online. As Florida's Attorney General, I am aware of how predators use social media to stalk the innocent and inexperienced online. It is imperative that these popular social media platforms develop strong, easy-to-use parental control systems to enhance child safety online."

Research increasingly demonstrates the negative impact that social media can have on the physical, emotional and mental well-being of children and teenagers. These range from decreased self-esteem and greater body-image dissatisfaction to increased exposure to cyberbullying and sexual predation. One app reported that in 2021 it analyzed more than 3.4 billion messages and found:

- 43.09% of tweens and 74.61% of teens were involved in a self-harm or suicidal situation;
- 68.97% of tweens and 90.73% of teens encountered nudity or content of a sexual nature;
- 75.35% of tweens and 93.31% of teens engaged in conversations surrounding drugs and alcohol;

- 80.82% of tweens and 94.50% of teens expressed or experienced violent subject matters or thoughts; and
- 72.09% of tweens and 85.00% of teens experienced bullying as a bully, victim or witness.

As the attorneys general note in the letter, “Parental control apps can alert parents or schools to messages and posts on platforms that have the potential to be harmful and dangerous. Apps can also alert parents of a child’s manifestations of desire for self-harm or suicide. On other platforms where these apps are allowed to operate appropriately, parents have received notifications of millions of instances of severe bullying and hundreds of thousands of self-harm situations, showing that these apps have the potential to save lives and prevent harm to our youth.”

To read the letter, click here.

Social media platforms already engage in some content moderation and operate under some community guidelines, but these are not always sufficient to protect children and teenagers who are particularly vulnerable to online threats, especially with regard to direct messaging. Parental control apps empower parents to be full partners with the platforms to maintain a safe space online for children.

Attorney General Moody is joined in the letter by the attorneys general of Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.