Mar 6, 2023

Contact Whitney Ray

Phone 850-245-0150

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

TikTok Multistate Investigation



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today asked a state court to compel TikTok to preserve and produce vital information to advance the multistate investigation into the China-owned social media company. Attorney General Moody and 45 attorneys general filed an amicus brief asking a state court to order TikTok to fully comply with an ongoing investigation into whether the company violated consumer protection laws in Florida and other states. The states are seeking to review internal TikTok communications to determine whether the company engaged in deceptive, unfair and unconscionable conduct that harmed the mental health of TikTok users, particularly children and teens.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “The states, Congress, parents and even some teens have raised serious questions about how this China-owned company is conducting business in the United States. Unfortunately, TikTok is not being forthcoming with answers, and we are being forced to take this action to further our important multistate investigation.”

Despite the request for these communications falling squarely within the investigative authority of the state attorneys general, today’s amicus brief asserts that TikTok repeatedly and knowingly failed to preserve relevant information or provide internal communications in a useful format. For example, TikTok employees use an instant-messaging service called Lark as their primary mechanism to communicate internally, but TikTok has flouted its duty to preserve communications and provide them in a useable format. TikTok instead continues to allow employees to send auto-deleting messages over the Lark platform—even after the start of the investigation—and provided messages to the states in a format that is difficult to use and navigate.

Because use of social media platforms like TikTok play a significant role in the ongoing mental-health crisis among young people, it is critical that TikTok produce all relevant internal corporate

communications to understand whether the company broke any laws.

There is a wealth of peer-reviewed research showing social media platforms, especially image and video-based platforms like TikTok, are playing a substantial role in harming youth mental health. For example, in February, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released findings demonstrating a startling increase in challenges to youth mental health, youth experiences of violence, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors among teenagers, especially teenage girls. This includes a finding that nearly one-third of teen girls seriously considered suicide in 2021, a nearly 60% increase from a decade prior. Other peer-reviewed research shows increased teen social media use is a significant driver of this crisis.

The attorneys general involved in the multistate investigation are tasked with protecting the people of their states from illegal business practices, and TikTok's failure to preserve and share relevant internal communications hampers the investigation. The filed brief therefore requests that the court compel TikTok to provide the information sought.

To view the amicus brief, click here.

Others joining the amicus brief with Attorney General Moody are the attorneys general from Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming. The Hawaii Office of Consumer Protection is also joined in the brief.