Florida Youth Deserve Better Than Gatekeeping of Social Apps

Dear State Representatives and Senators,

As a consumer advocacy group engaged on digital issues, privacy, and defending technological innovation, representing both our members and consumers, we implore you to consider another path when it comes to protecting Florida youth online, specifically HB1.

In its current form the law would be the most draconian age-verification process for online platforms in the nation, barring all users under 16 who want to use specific social media platforms.

This process would also require select social media apps to collect sensitive personal information that we do not believe should not ever be in the possession of any private entities by government mandate. This is ripe for future abuse or data security issues that could have real harm for young people beginning their life online. It will be a pandora’s box of epic proportion.

What’s more, the law makes line-item exceptions to popular social apps like YouTube, Truth Social, and others, which have all the same features as other apps, demonstrating the unequal regulatory position sought by the State of Florida, choosing winners and loses, which we would not tolerate in any other industry.

A solution respecting parental rights, defending American innovation, and allowing online consumers and their parents to choose their apps would not only be more adequate, but would allow the best private sector solutions to emerge, rather than by state decree.

Parents should not have their own authority and decision-making usurped by state law or institutions, no matter how noble the cause. Rather than risk gatekeeping an entire generation from enjoying social connections online, we implore you to provide another solution that works for parents, young online consumers, and the American tech innovators who provide value for each and every one of us in our own lives.

In a free country with a vibrant competitive marketplace, we will not have a competitive global edge if an entire generation is kept from the keyboard and online global village.

Sincerely yours,

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