



Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

As co-founders of Spark & Stitch Institute, we are writing to express our support for the Minnesota Age Appropriate Design Code. We believe that this bill represents a critical opportunity to ensure that technology is designed with the best interests of children in mind and that it promotes their healthy development and wellbeing.

We have been working closely with Minnesota families, educators, and mental health professionals for over twenty-five years, first when Dr. Walsh founded the National Institute on Media and the Family in partnership with Fairview Health Services and now with Spark & Stitch Institute. Our mission has always been to maximize the benefits and minimize the harms of media's impact on child health and development.

The widespread use of technology by children and adolescents has raised many concerns about its impact on their mental health, social development, and safety. While evidence shows that young people can benefit from digital activities, it is most often *in spite of how platforms are designed, not because of it*. The business priorities of the platforms, including maximizing and monetizing time and attention, are at odds with the developmental needs of children and teens. As experts in child development and psychology, we have seen firsthand the ways in which technology can be harmful to young people, from the risks of cyberbullying and extreme content to the negative effects on sleep, attention, and mental health. Currently, the entire burden of protection is placed on Minnesota families and children themselves which is both unfair and further amplifies inequities in risk exposure.

By requiring companies to design technology with the best interests of children in mind, we can lead the nation in ensuring that their online experiences are safe, positive, and beneficial to their growth and development.

We strongly urge you to support the Minnesota Age Appropriate Design Code, ensuring that the needs of our children are always a top priority online. As experts in child development and psychology, we believe this bill represents a crucial step forward in protecting Minnesota children from the risks of technology while ensuring they have continued access to the many benefits that technology can afford.

Sincerely,

Erin Walsh and Dr. David Walsh
Co-founders of Spark & Stitch Institute