THE ANXIOUS GENERATION

April 27, 2026

The Honorable Matthew D. Klein
Chair
Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection
Minnesota State Senate
2105 Minnesota Senate Building, St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: SUPPORT FOR SF 4100 – Digital Choice Act

Dear Chair Klein and Members of the Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection,

We are writing to support SF 4100, the Digital Choice Act, which would provide Minnesota consumers with greater choice in their use of online communications platforms. Social media companies know that they are facilitating and causing vast harms to our kids, and have repeatedly failed to act. Many young people regret their time spent on social media, and feel compelled to use them because all of their friends are using them. Even as we work to reform and regulate existing social media platforms, users should have realistic and safer online alternatives. The Digital Choice Act would enable such alternatives. We ask you to hear the bill and support its enactment.

We are the author and primary researcher of the book, *The Anxious Generation*, which documented the negative effects that smartphones and heavy use of social media has had on youth around the globe. The book has spent over a year at the top of bestseller lists and has been used to motivate grassroots mobilization of students, teachers, administrators, and parents toward regulating social media platforms. Technology can certainly provide benefits to young people, but the current business incentives and design practices of some tech companies are leading them to cause vast harm to children and adolescents. Protecting kids from online harm is non-partisan, and supported by the majority of Americans. Legislators have the opportunity to take clear decisive action, joining the bi-partisan movement to protect kids' mental health, attention, and relationships by supporting reforms to how these products are designed.

Social media platforms, as they currently exist, are designed in ways that drive an unacceptable number of kids into crisis. As documented in our book and our Substack, heavy social media use greatly increases the risk of depression, anxiety, eating disorders, addiction, and an array of other

harms for adolescents. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of American kids are being harmed by these platforms every year. Despite the health costs of using these platforms, many kids continue to use them, in part because of design patterns and AI powered algorithms that maximize engagement. In fact, one recent study found 72% of kids report feeling manipulated by social media platforms. Children are still developing their ability to exhibit self-control in the face of immediate rewards—they know that they need help to control their online behavior. Kids' inability to control their use is no accident. The platforms are purposely designed to keep kids on screens, so that the companies can sell their attention to advertisers to increase profits.

One internal Instagram study found that 8.1% of users report being a target of bullying, 11.9% report receiving an unwanted sexual advance, and 16.3% report seeing unwanted sexually explicit content **every seven days**. Those numbers rise to 10.8% reporting being bullied, 13% receiving an unwanted sexual advance, and 19.2% seeing unwanted sexually explicit content for 13-15 year olds.

The Digital Choice Act would enable all Minnesota citizens, including children, to choose platforms that serve their needs, rather than the needs of advertisers. Consumers would be able to take their messages, photos, connections and followers from a service that manipulates them to one that helps them achieve their goals. The Act would allow users to either control these unwanted experiences using third party tools or to bring their data to a platform where these unwanted experiences are far less common.

This bill empowers individual families to make the choices they need to make to protect their kids. The need is urgent and critical. We need legislators to pass the Digital Choice Act now.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Haidt

Author, The Anxious Generation

Zach Rausch

Chief Researcher and Author, After Babel