



# Kids Code Coalition

PRIORITIZING THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE ONLINE

## Social Media Warning Labels

The Kids Code Coalition brings together a wide cross-section of organizations from across the country to secure passage of legislation to protect kids online. Social media warning labels are one of our key legislative priorities.

This legislation follows a well-established precedent: health warnings on products like tobacco and alcohol. These warning labels have historically raised public awareness, shifted norms, and changed behavior — particularly around harmful health effects. In the same way, social media warning labels aim to inform users, especially adolescents and their families, about the risks associated with excessive social media use.

### The Problem

Kids and teens across the country are facing a mounting mental health crisis:

- 1 in 3 teen girls have seriously considered attempting suicide.
- Nearly three out of four teens say they struggle with loneliness.

- Over 10% of Black and Latino students report making a suicide plan in the past year.

These trends notably started around 2012 — coinciding with the rise of smartphones and widespread social media use. Research now confirms a correlation:

- Adolescents who spend 3+ hours per day on social media face double the risk of anxiety and depression.
- The average teen uses social media 4.8 hours per day.
- Nearly half of adolescents say social media makes them feel worse about their bodies.

Emerging data — much of it revealed only through litigation or whistleblowers — suggests that social media platforms are designed to maximize user engagement, often to the detriment of users' mental health. Leaked TikTok documents report that:

- Users can become addicted in as little as 35 minutes.
- High usage correlates with increased anxiety, diminished memory and empathy, and other cognitive harms.

### Legislative Solution

Social media warning labels would require social media platforms to display a mental health warning label every time a vulnerable user accesses the platform. Designated



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health officials in a state would be tasked with developing and enforcing rules governing these labels, including who qualifies as a "vulnerable user," what social media platforms are covered, and what the label must contain in terms of design and language—such as mental health resources and suicide prevention hotlines. Platforms would be prohibited from hiding, minimizing, or allowing users to disable the warning in a manner inconsistent with the rules established by the designated officials.

Putting warning labels on social media doesn't let tech companies off the hook. While existing laws protect platforms from being sued over what users post, they don't protect companies from being held responsible for how their apps are designed — especially if those designs are knowingly harmful or addictive. These labels are meant to inform the public including young people, parents, educators, and elected officials, not as a shield for tech companies against lawsuits.

## What Are States Doing?

In recent years, social media warning labels have gained strong bipartisan momentum. The former U.S. Surgeon General, 42 state attorneys general, and lawmakers from both parties have endorsed the concept of social media warning labels. California, Colorado, Minnesota, and New York have already passed legislation requiring social media

warning labels or notifications, and similar bills have been introduced federally and in states across the country.

## Who's in the Kids Code Coalition?

The Kids Code Coalition includes national organizations like the Center for Humane Tech, Common Sense Media, Design It For Us, Ekō, Fairplay for Kids, Issue One, ParentsTogether, MAMA, The Anxious Generation, and The Tech Oversight Project alongside state and local groups to advocate for kids' online safety.

## For More Information

You can check out the Kids Code Coalition at [KidsCodeCoalition.org](https://KidsCodeCoalition.org). Please reach out to [contact@kidscodecoalition.org](mailto:contact@kidscodecoalition.org) with any questions or to schedule a meeting.