



March 25, 2025

Dear Representatives,

We, the undersigned coalition of child advocacy organizations, urge you to support app store accountability, a critical step toward ensuring transparency, accountability, and parental authority over children's online experiences.

For too long, app stores have operated as digital gatekeepers with little accountability, allowing children to download apps and agree to complex contracts with billion-dollar corporations, without a parent ever knowing. These agreements often give apps sweeping access to kids' personal data – photos, contact lists, exact locations, even microphones, and cameras – without meaningful safeguards or their parents' knowledge. If this were happening in any other industry, it would be unthinkable.

Even the most involved parents can't keep up with the sheer number of apps their kids are using. On average, children have 40 different apps on their phones, each with its own risks, privacy policies, settings, and data collection practices. It's not that parents aren't paying attention – it's that the system isn't built to keep them informed.

Currently, default smartphone settings allow teens to download apps without notifying their parents. A teen could download a video chatting app that lets them talk to strangers, a disappearing-messages app, or a hookup app, use it for one night, then delete it before morning.

Even when parents are capable of navigating the complex maze of twenty steps to engage parental controls, they're often provided with deceptive safety disclosures. The age ratings in app stores are misleading, inconsistent, and lack accountability. A *Wall Street Journal* investigation exposed how Apple regularly labels apps with violent, sexual, or exploitative content as safe for young users. A Canadian Center for Child Protection report found that both Apple and Google's rating systems fail to accurately reflect the risks of the apps they promote. Parents assume these ratings are accurate, but in reality, they can't be trusted.

The App Store Accountability Act introduces three basic, common-sense protections that would finally give parents the tools they need:

1. **Parental Approval for App Downloads and Purchases:** App stores are required to obtain verifiable parental consent before minors can download apps or make in-app purchases, protecting children from privacy risks, financial harm, and unenforceable contracts.
2. **Accurate and Transparent Age Ratings:** App age ratings must reflect actual content and in-app experiences. Parents and state Attorneys General are empowered to take legal action against misrepresented app safety disclosures.
3. **Secure Age Verification:** App stores must securely share verified age categories with apps, enabling developers to comply with laws like COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act) and provide in-app experiences consistent with their stated age ratings, enhancing safety and simplifying compliance.

For too long, parents have been expected to do the impossible—monitor every app, every update, every risk—while app stores profit off their kids. The App Store Accountability Act sets up commonsense guardrails while ensuring that parents have the final say over the online lives of their children.

We strongly urge you to support this bill. Families deserve better tools, clearer information, and robust protection. This is a chance to finally hold app stores accountable and put the safety of kids first.

Sincerely,

American Principles Project
Defend Young Minds
National Center on Sexual Exploitation
Ethics and Public Policy Center
Family Policy Alliance
Heritage Action
The Institute for Family Studies
The Stop Trafficking Project®
Parents Who Fight
Protect Young Eyes
Alabama Eagle Forum
Moms for Liberty – Madison County, AL Chapter
Texas Public Policy Foundation
Dignity Defense Institute
Utah Parents United
3Strands Global Foundation
A Butterfly Gets Her Wings Back LLC
Addo Recovery-Washington
All Girls Allowed, Inc.
American Youth Association
ANEW Life International
Better Screen Time
Better Tech Project
Bilateral Safety Corridor Coalition
Bowman Therapeutics
Breaking Generational Cycles
Chains Interrupted
CORAFID Centre for Innovation and Research
Demand Disruption
Digital Progress Institute
Dr. Jill Manning, PLLC
Educate and Empower Kids
Elijah Rising
Greenway Recovery
Guided Purposes, LLC
KIDS TOO
Kingdom Forerunners

Palmetto Freedom Fund
Palmetto Family Council
Louisiana Family Forum
Faith Wins
NC Stop Human Trafficking
No Trafficking Zone
Not On our Watch Texas
Nurses United Against Human Trafficking
Paving the Way Foundation
Project STAND
Refuge for Women Chicago
Rest Stop Ministries
Restore the Child, PLLC
Revelation & Restoration Music & Drama
Runaway Girl
Scarlet Road
Scrolling 2 Death
Skull Games
Society for the Improvement of Rural People (SIRP)
Street Grace
Survivor Leader Network of San Diego
The Hope Foundation
Tin Man Ministries
Trafficking in America Task Force
Transformation Garden
Unto You & to Your Children/Revelation & Restoration
Vessels of Mercy International, Inc.
Walk Her Home
Yellowstone Human Trafficking Task Force
Zoe Ministries of Delaware
Hannah's Hope
Hookers For Jesus
Igniting Embers
Innocence en Danger
Lynn's Warriors
More Too Life