

Kids Online Safety Act

Legislation to impose responsibility on online platforms and give minors and parents new tools

[S 1409](#), co-authored by Sens. Blumenthal (D-Conn.) and Blackburn (R-Tenn.)

What does the Kids Online Safety Act do?

KOSA requires companies to prioritize children and teens' health and well-being over profits and engagement. This means covered platforms have a duty of care to prevent or mitigate harms posed by the platform, and offer parents and minors safeguards and tools like strong default privacy settings. KOSA also imposes transparency requirements that would shed more light on how these online platforms operate. In July 2023, the Senate Commerce Committee unanimously approved the bill.

What online harms does KOSA require platforms to prevent or mitigate?

- Anxiety, depression, eating disorders, substance use disorders, and suicidal behaviors
- Patterns of use that indicate or encourage addiction-like behavior
- Physical violence, online bullying, or harassment of a minor
- Sexual exploitation and abuse
- Promotion and marketing of narcotic drugs, tobacco products, gambling, or alcohol
- Predatory, unfair, or deceptive marketing practices, or other financial harms

What safeguards and controls does KOSA give children and parents?

Platforms are required to enable the strongest privacy settings by default. Parents and teens finally will not have to go into the

privacy settings of each of the dozens, if not hundreds, of online services and apps they use if they want to limit the amount of data that companies collect and share on them.

Minors can limit strangers from contacting them, prevent others from viewing their personal data collected by or shared on the platform, and opt out of algorithmic recommendation systems. Parents can control these specific account settings for their children under age 13, and view the settings for teens 13 to 16. Parents can also restrict financial transactions and track the time their child spends on a platform.

How does KOSA promote transparency?

Covered platforms must conduct annual independent audits that identify the risks of harm to minors.

Why is this legislation necessary?

Youth in our country are facing a mental health crisis, and we cannot ignore online platforms' role in that. The U.S. has traditionally put the full burden on parents to keep their children safe online. This does not get to the root problem of how companies design platforms to maximize engagement, often at the cost of a child's well-being, such as through the use of algorithms that amplify harmful content. KOSA would finally impose responsibility on companies for how their platforms harm minors, while also giving minors and parents more meaningful controls.