



January 23, 2023

House Committee on Education
Attn: Chair Rep. Robert Behning
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Re: HB 1358 - "Digital Literacy Pilot Program" (Support)

Dear Chair Representative Robert Behning and Members of the House Committee on Education:

On behalf of the Computer & Communications Industry Association (CCIA), I write to support HB 1358.

CCIA is a 50-year-old not-for-profit international tech trade association that advocates for policy and market conditions that benefit innovation, the tech sector, and consumers.¹ We strongly believe children deserve an enhanced level of security and privacy online. Currently, there are a number of efforts among our members to incorporate protective design features into their websites and platforms. CCIA's members have been leading the effort in raising the standard for teen safety and privacy across the tech industry by creating new features, settings, parental tools, and protections that are age-appropriate and tailored to the differing developmental needs of young people.

Given the complexity of tackling this critical issue, existing industry efforts to support child safety and privacy online could be bolstered by educational curricula focused on how to be a good citizen online. Offering such education to children would provide a more holistic approach to fostering children's online safety. Specifically, we laud the efforts to implement a program that focuses on ensuring students have the ability to safely use, understand, communicate, and create with technology, media, and digital resources. Enabling young people to operate and respond in appropriate ways would promote safer online habits and may serve as a deterrent to engaging in negative online behaviors such as cyberbullying or voluntarily giving away personal identifiable information.²

Online services, whether for personal or educational purposes, are part of everyday life for many young people. The Child Mind Institute, which develops and provides educators and school-based mental health professionals with evidence-based prevention and intervention training programs for schools K-12, has expressed that it is possible that removing access to social media and the internet from children may actually have adverse effects.³ Alternatively,

¹ For 50 years, CCIA has promoted open markets, open systems, and open networks. CCIA members employ more than 1.6 million workers, invest more than \$100 billion in research and development, and contribute trillions of dollars in productivity to the global economy. A list of CCIA members is available at <https://www.ccianet.org/members>.

² See New Jersey's [recently passed law](#) signed by Governor Phil Murphy (D) on January 4, 2023.

³ JoJo Marshall, *When should you come between a teenager and their phone?*, Child Mind Institute (Dec. 19, 2022), <https://childmind.org/article/when-should-you-come-between-a-teenager-and-her-phone/#what-happens-when-you-confiscate-that-phone>



many experts recommend that parents help young people learn self-regulation skills and proper online behavior similar to teaching them self-regulation when it comes to other personal habits and choices.

The connected nature of social media has also led some to claim that online services may be negatively impacting teenagers’ mental health. However, researchers argue that this theory is not well supported by existing evidence and repeats a “moral panic” argument frequently associated with new technologies and new modes of communication. Instead, social media effects are nuanced,⁴ small at best, reciprocal over time, and gender-specific. Pew Research Center found that teens themselves also paint a nuanced picture of the effects of social media. It is one in which majorities credit these platforms⁵ with deepening connections and providing a support network when they need it. In their recent survey, 80% of teens say that what they see on social media makes them feel more connected to what’s going on in their friends’ lives, while 71% say it makes them feel like they have a place where they can show their creative side. Additionally, 67% also say these platforms make them feel as if they have people who can support them through tough times.

Due to many of the positive impacts social media and online services as a whole have had on connecting with loved ones, education, resources, and much more, it is imperative to educate young people on how to appropriately and effectively navigate these spaces to further facilitate these positive outcomes from internet use while also giving them the tools to protect themselves when negative occurrences arise.

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We appreciate the House Committee on Education’s consideration of these comments and stand ready to provide additional information as the General Assembly considers proposals related to technology policy.

Sincerely,

Khara Boender
State Policy Director
Computer & Communications Industry Association

⁴ Amy Orben *et al.*, *Social Media’s enduring effect on adolescent life satisfaction*, PNAS (May 6, 2019), <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1902058116>.

⁵ Monica Anderson *et al.*, *Connection, creativity and drama: Teen life on social media in 2022*, Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech (Nov. 17, 2022), <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/11/16/connection-creativity-and-drama-teen-life-on-social-media-in-2022/>.