

June 20, 2023

Senator Nancy Skinner
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 8630
Sacramento, CA 95814



RE: Support for Senate Bill 680 (Skinner)

Dear Senator Skinner,

The California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN) is pleased to support your bill, SB 680, which would prohibit social media platforms to knowingly or carelessly cause children to inflict harm on themselves or others, develop an eating disorder, or experience addiction to their platforms. In addition, the bill would fine platforms accordingly for failure to comply or for harm caused.

The California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN) is a youth-led statewide network comprised of TAY Action Teams and CAYEN Board members which engages, empowers and represents Transitional Age Youth (TAY), ages 15-26, in mental health advocacy on issues that directly affect TAY. Since CAYEN's inception in 2006, CAYEN has taken many forms of action to empower TAY in their personal lives and spark progressive change in public policy. The increasing use and impact of social media platforms have made this bill a priority for our youth.

We oppose the dangerous algorithms of social media platforms that direct users, including children and youth, to harmful content. Youth's accessibility to weapons, substances, and other dangerous content via social media platforms has proven to be life threatening. Senate Bill 680 takes a bold step to hold social media platforms accountable for their part in intermediating illegal activity and life-threatening youth trends.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that children in the U.S. ages eight to 10 spend an average of six hours per day in front of a screen; kids ages 11 to 14 spend an average of nine hours per day in front of a screen; and youth ages 15 to 18 spend an average of seven-and-a-half hours per day in front of a screen, with much of that time viewing social media content. Research has revealed that the intentional design of these social media platforms --design that uses artificial intelligence to maximize "user engagement" -- causes addiction to the platform, particularly for children.

This bill prohibits a social media platform from causing child users to:

- Inflict harm on themselves or others;
- Develop an eating disorder;
- Experience addiction to the social media platform.

www.ca-yen.org

Harm is defined in this bill as physical, mental, or emotional as indeed, we know that children have suffered a variety of harms from social media platforms' designs, algorithms, and features. This bill limits enforcement to public prosecutors and offers a "safe harbor" from all liability to any platform that audits its practices quarterly and voluntarily ceases those that cause the harms listed above.

For these reasons, we support Senate Bill 680. If you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at dthirakul@mhac.org, or our Interim Director of Public Policy, Karen Vicari at kvicari@mhacofca.org.

In Community,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Thirakul', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Danny Thirakul
Public Policy Coordinator
California Youth Empowerment Network