DATE

The Honorable Charles Schumer

Majority Leader

United States Senate

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer:

As advocates for children’s health, online safety, privacy, mental health, parents, young people, and technology used for the common good, we are writing to express our deep disappointment over the news that the bipartisan *S.1409, The* *Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA)* will not receive a vote by the full Senate before the end of the year. Given the [overwhelming public and bipartisan support](https://issueone.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/IP-Memo-KOSA-Nov-2023.pdf) for the legislation – including support from 86% of Americans — calls for passage from [President Biden](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/07/26/senate-hottest-hearing-ai-policy/) and the [United States Surgeon General](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/23/health/surgeon-general-social-media-mental-health.html), and its approval by the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee in July, this decision allows social media platforms to continue to place profits over kids’ safety. The [evidence is clear](https://www.mass.gov/news/ag-campbell-files-lawsuit-against-meta-instagram-for-unfair-and-deceptive-practices-that-harm-young-people) that Big Tech has knowingly profited at the expense of our kids’ well-being. Already too many kids and families have experienced the dire consequences that result from social media companies’ greed. Accountability is far overdue.

We strongly and respectfully urge you to schedule a vote on KOSA for the first week Congress returns in January.

We were encouraged by your indications of support earlier this year for bringing KOSA and other kids and tech-related legislation to the floor for a vote in 2023. Parents, educators, medical experts, young people, and a broad swath of the public have been counting on it, and they have [called for action](https://techoversight.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/22-20230601-Kids-Online-Safety-Polling-Tracker.pdf) to address the dangers posed by Big Tech’s platforms – because they’ve seen up close the harms to children and teens and the economic incentives that govern the platforms’ decisions. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide rates among 10 to 24 year-olds have doubled in the last 20 years, and more than [10,000 people die every year from eating disorders](https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/disparities-in-suicide.html). Companies have derived [millions of dollars](https://fairplayforkids.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/designing_for_disorder.pdf) per year by “optimizing” algorithms for engagement resulting in increased exposure among young girls of ‘pro-anorexia’ videos and other content that promotes eating disorders.

It’s no surprise that the Surgeon General has [warned that social media platforms pose a “profound risk of harm” to youth](https://techoversight.us20.list-manage.com/track/click?u=8339a53683399ad76f75a205d&id=d768335f3a&e=eb4d567db2).

All the while, social media companies [know the extent](https://www.inc.com/jason-aten/instagram-reels-is-a-copy-of-tiktok-an-example-of-everything-wrong-with-facebook.html) to which their products are harming kids online – and in some cases are [trying to make it harder to report abuse](https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/08/tech/meta-facebook-instagram-teen-safety/index.html). Big Tech’s [addictive algorithms](https://apnews.com/article/data-privacy-regulation-facebook-instagram-social-media-798dbfa6004da3a2aa2c36031369a909) are manipulative, generating and suggesting content based on previous behavior. The onus must be on the companies to make their products safe and not designed to fill kids’ feeds with posts that promote eating disorders, suicide, drug use, or sexual abuse. But it is Congress’ responsibility to force the platforms to enact and enforce the changes that these companies refuse to make, despite the evidence of their platforms’ harms.

That’s why KOSA is supported by [over 200 national, state, and local organizations](https://www.apa.org/news/apa/2023/kids-online-safety-act-senate-letter). KOSA passed out of committee unanimously because it will help repair a broken status quo and protect children and teens online from social media's worst harms.

While it's encouraging to see that the Senate Judiciary Committee will be hearing directly from tech CEOs at the end of January, another congressional reprimand will not make the internet safer and healthier for children and families; only congressional passage of KOSA and other online safety and tech-related legislation can do that.

We believe that you and many other members of the Senate are serious about wanting to protect kids and teens online, but the only way to make a difference in kids’ and parents’ lives now is to pass KOSA as soon as possible. We strongly and respectfully urge you to schedule a vote on KOSA for the first week Congress returns in January.

We thank you for your leadership in this critical area and we look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,