

U.S. Rep. Steil: Introduces Protecting Young Minds Online Act

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WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congressman Bryan Steil (WI-01) and Congresswoman Becca Balint (VT-AL) introduced the Protecting Young Minds Online Act, legislation to require the Center for Mental Health Services to develop and disseminate a strategy to address the effects of new technologies, like social media, on children’s mental health.

“I’m working to protect children from the negative effects of social media. The effect of that usage is causing children to suffer from depression, anxiety, and in worst cases self-harm and suicide at alarming rates. Our federal agency tasked with addressing this crisis must have a strategy in place to meet this challenge. Experts on mental health need to come together to give parents, teachers, and children the tools they need to promote positive mental health and protect our nation’s children online. This nonpartisan legislation is a step in the right direction for helping and protecting our children’s mental health,” **said Steil.**

“We are in the midst of a crisis of loneliness in this country and so many young people are relying on social media and technology for connection. But these tools can also have negative effects on our mental health. We can see the immediate impact, but we don’t yet know the long-term effects on our kids. As a mom of two teens, and as a former teacher, I’m deeply concerned about the mental health impact of social media on our youth. I’m proud to introduce bipartisan legislation to take the important step of promoting positive use of social media while protecting our youth from the potentially dangerous consequences,” **said Balint.**

Background:

May is Mental Health Awareness Month.

In recent years, there have been a significant increase in mental health disorders in youth, including depression, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth ages 15-24. Approximately one out of every 15 high school students report attempting suicide each year.

According to the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, one in three teenage girls seriously considered attempting suicide and the rates of sadness are the highest reported in a decade. In total, approximately 900,000 youth aged 12-17 and 1.7 million adults attempted suicide and 12.3 million had serious thoughts of suicide in 2021.

Recent studies have also shown that social media use can negatively affect youth, distracting them, exposing them to bullying, rumor spreading, unrealistic views of other people's lives, and much more.

To read the full text of the legislation, click [here](#).