



DAVID STEFFEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 4TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 11, 2023

Contact: Rep. Steffen
(608) 237-9104

Rep. Steffen Proposes Social Media Regulations to Keep Kids Safe

Madison, WI – Today, Representative David Steffen (R-Howard) announced legislation that will establish important protections for Wisconsin kids who have social media accounts. The growing body of research and reports connecting social media use to mental health problems in youth has been the primary motivator for the introduction of this legislation by Rep. Steffen.

Rep. Steffen cited several studies that highlight the impact of social media on our children:

1. Mayo Clinic has identified several studies that link increased social media use, in-particular overnight use, with increased depression and anxiety in teens.
2. A University of Toledo study revealed that social media is increasingly being used to “contact, recruit, and sell children for sex.”
3. Pew Research showed that roughly half of teens experience online bullying and harassment. Furthermore, roughly 75% of teens don’t feel social media companies or elected officials are doing enough to address the problem.

“Today, social media companies, advertisers, and predators have easy, electronic access to our kids. It has become obvious that this has been at the expense of the health and wellbeing of our children. It’s our job as parents or guardians to keep our kids safe, but the current online environment has made that nearly impossible. This legislation will assist parents and protect children by enacting a series of common-sense requirements on social media companies,” said Rep. Steffen.

The number of children accessing social media platforms on a daily basis has significantly increased over the last fourteen years. Even more concerning, the average number of hours children are engaging in extended periods of social media use is continuing to rise. An increasing number of scientific studies are indicating that extensive, uncontrolled social media use creates a whole host of concerns. The effects of social media on kids are wide ranging and well-documented and include: sleep deprivation, increased depression and anxiety, poor body image, and exposure to cyberbullying and online predators.

Rep. Steffen’s proposal is modeled after the recently signed Utah law, which established enforceable regulations for social media companies to follow when administering accounts held by children.



DAVID STEFFEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 4TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Specifically, Rep. Steffen's legislation will:

- Enhance parental oversight and access to their child's account
- Require age verification to ensure restrictions are placed on accounts held by kids
- Protect children during the overnight hours by establishing a nighttime curfew on their accounts
- Restrict the type of advertising and direct messaging targeted at minor accounts
- Impose penalties on social media companies for noncompliance

The bill will be formally introduced in the coming weeks and begin working its way through the legislative process this session.

For more information please contact the office of Representative Steffen at (608)237-9104 or by email at Rep.Steffen@legis.wisconsin.gov.

###