



May 13, 2024

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation
253 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation
253 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Cantwell, Ranking Member Cruz, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB Coalition), the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN), the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA), and the American Library Association (ALA), we write to express our opposition to the “Eyes on the Board Act” section of the proposed “Kids Off Social Media Act”.

We appreciate efforts to protect children from the potential harms of social media, but the E-rate program is a poor tool to address this issue. The E-rate program provides critical access to broadband for students, teachers, library patrons, and their communities; imposing additional barriers and burdens on E-rate applicants would be especially damaging to schools and school districts who are already under-resourced. Amending the E-rate program will create significant uncertainty and denial of funding for the schools that rely on the E-rate’s critical funding to promote education and learning.

Further, requiring schools to create and enforce social media policies as a condition of receiving E-rate funding will not be effective, as students will bypass the school’s network and access social media through other networks (such as traditional cellphone data service).

We also note that blocking all social media access could put students, teachers, and staff in danger in emergency situations such as school shootings or tornadoes. Social media sites can sometimes provide the quickest way to send urgent information to students, teachers, and parents.

Relatedly, requiring mandatory screen time policies and certification by schools is not only burdensome, but it also suggests that education technology is inherently harmful, even when carefully adopted by local communities for valid educational purposes. For example, some students with disabilities benefit immensely from assistive technologies that may involve considerable screen time.

The decisions about social media and screen time policies should be left to local school officials who know how to tailor these policies to suit the needs of their communities. We oppose federal intervention that may circumvent community-level decisions regarding appropriate social media use.

We remain committed to working with you and your colleagues to find solutions that protect children online while preserving the educational value of online learning and ensuring schools can continue to benefit from the E-rate program. We appreciate your consideration of our concerns and look forward to further engaging with the Committee on this important issue.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Members of the Senate Commerce Committee