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TO: Interested Parties
FROM: PPI
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RE: New PPI Poll on Online Age Verification Proposals

In state capitals from coast to coast—and increasingly in Washington, DC—lawmakers are trying to address growing concerns around kids’ online safety. Debates over how to create safer online experiences for children and teens while empowering parents to make the right decisions for their families have fueled the creation and consideration of a wave of bills and legislative proposals. There is bipartisan agreement that more must be done, but far less clarity around who should bear responsibility for preventing and mitigating online harms. Despite good intentions, many proposals advancing at the state and federal level risk undermining privacy, parental authority, and innovation without making any meaningful improvements to children’s safety.

In the past year, several states with Republican-dominated legislatures enacted age verification laws that place the burden on app stores to verify users’ ages and obtain parental consent before every download or in-app purchase. While presented as child safety measures, these laws raise serious concerns about the collection of sensitive data, the potential exposure of minors’ personal information, and significant compliance costs—particularly for small app developers. Texas, Utah, and Louisiana have already passed sweeping mandates that place responsibility for age verification directly on app stores, and more states have introduced or will be considering similar proposals in 2026.

There are several efforts at the federal level to address the real online harms for kids. Some proposals, like the App Store Accountability Act, shift the burden of age checks away from the platforms themselves and onto app stores and small businesses. These legislative and regulatory measures have their pros and cons, but too often the voice of the people who use these services every day in the real world are drowned out.

WHY THIS MATTERS

There is broad consensus that kids’ online safety is a national priority. Yet in a crowded legislative environment, competing proposals risk sidelining what matters most: ensuring kids’ safety in ways that are practical and aligned with parents’ values.

To better understand these priorities—particularly among parents—PPI commissioned new research to explore these challenging topics and inform the creation of an effective approach to protecting kids online. The findings highlight pathways to achieving the shared goal of creating safer online experiences for kids while protecting their privacy, empowering parents, ensuring social media companies do their part, and ultimately, to avoid breaking what works.

KEY FINDINGS

Americans agree that kids today are not safe online.

- Three in four (72%) adults say kids are not safe online, including 28% who say kids are “very unsafe” online.

Parents overwhelmingly believe social media platforms must protect kids from harmful content.

- Almost all adults (87%), including 90% of parents, agree that social media platforms have a responsibility to **prevent kids from seeing inappropriate content like pornography or violence.**
- Similarly, nearly all adults (85%), including 90% of parents, say **platforms should ensure users only see age-appropriate content.**

Americans see social networks—not app stores—as key to keeping kids safe online.

- A majority of adults, including 65% of parents, agree that social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X play a critical role in keeping kids safe online.
- Parents strongly favor **constant safety protections built into platforms** over one-time age checks when an app is downloaded.

Parents reject app store-based age verification as a comprehensive solution.

- A majority of parents believe that a one-time age check at the point of download will not make kids more safe online. Instead, 70% of parents say that protections should be constantly keeping minors safe while they use an app.
- Similarly, two in three parents (66%) say that kids’ online safety is a shared responsibility across platforms, not just an initial age check. **Only one in three (34%) believe app store age verification alone will keep kids safe online.**

Most parents are deeply concerned about the privacy risks and unintended consequences of solutions being proposed.

- Over half (54%) of adults say they **do not trust apps to keep kids’ age information secure** from hackers or other bad actors.

- A majority of adults, including 70% of parents, worry that requiring parental approval for every app download—particularly for older teens—creates a **slippery slope that could restrict access to important information and supportive communities**.

IMPLICATIONS

Americans want solutions that:

- **Protect privacy and data security** by avoiding the unnecessary collection of minors' personal information.
- **Empower parents** with tools and resources to make informed decisions for their families.
- **Provide continuous protection**, not one-time age checks.
- **Hold social media companies accountable** for shielding kids from harmful content.

The federal App Store Accountability Act—and state legislation that closely mirrors it—fail these tests. Lawmakers should pursue policies that reflect the real concerns of parents and align with their priorities: balanced, comprehensive solutions that keep kids safe online without creating new risks.

METHODOLOGY

Morning Consult conducted a poll from September 9–13, 2025 among 2,200 general public respondents, including an oversample of 500 adults in Michigan and 500 adults in Pennsylvania. Interviews were conducted online and weighted to approximate a target sample of adults based on age, gender, race, educational attainment, region, gender by age, and race by educational attainment. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of ± 2 percentage points.