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S. 1586

To safeguard children by providing parents with clear and accurate information about the apps downloaded and used by their children and to ensure proper parental consent is achieved, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 1, 2025

Mr. LEE introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To safeguard children by providing parents with clear and accurate information about the apps downloaded and used by their children and to ensure proper parental consent is achieved, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
5 “App Store Accountability Act”.

6 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for
7 this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Definitions.
- Sec. 3. App store obligations.

Sec. 4. App developer obligations.
 Sec. 5. Compliance.
 Sec. 6. Enforcement by the Federal Trade Commission.
 Sec. 7. Enforcement by States.
 Sec. 8. Safe harbor.
 Sec. 9. Preemption.
 Sec. 10. Severability.
 Sec. 11. Effective date.

1 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

2 In this Act:

3 (1) AGE CATEGORY.—The term “age category”
 4 means the category of an individual based on their
 5 age, including the following categories:

6 (A) ADULT.—An “adult” is such an indi-
 7 vidual who has attained 18 years of age.

8 (B) TEENAGER.—A “teenager” is such an
 9 individual who has attained 16 years of age but
 10 has not attained 18 years of age.

11 (C) CHILD.—A “child” is such an indi-
 12 vidual who has attained 13 years of age but has
 13 not attained 16 years of age.

14 (D) YOUNG CHILD.—A “young child” is
 15 such an individual who has not attained 13
 16 years of age.

17 (2) AGE CATEGORY DATA.—The term “age cat-
 18 egory data” means information that identifies the
 19 age category of a user and is collected by a covered
 20 app store provider and shared with an app devel-
 21 oper.

1 (3) AGE RATING.—The term “age rating”
2 means a publicly displayed assessment of an app’s
3 appropriateness for different age categories.

4 (4) APP.—The term “app” means a software
5 application or electronic service that may be run or
6 directed by a user on a computer, mobile device, or
7 any other general purpose computing device.

8 (5) APP DEVELOPER.—The term “app devel-
9 oper” means any person that owns or controls an
10 app on the app store of a covered app store provider
11 and is available in the United States.

12 (6) APP STORE.—The term “app store” means
13 a publicly available website, software application, or
14 other electronic service that distributes and facili-
15 tates the download onto a mobile device of an app
16 from a third-party developer by a user of a com-
17 puter, mobile device, or any other general purpose
18 computing device.

19 (7) COMMISSION.—The term “Commission”
20 means the Federal Trade Commission.

21 (8) COVERED APP STORE PROVIDER.—The
22 term “covered app store provider” means any person
23 that owns or controls an app store available in the
24 United States and for which users in the United
25 States exceed 5,000,000.

1 (9) KNOW.—The term “know” means to have
2 actual knowledge or willful disregard.

3 (10) MINOR.—The term “minor” means an in-
4 dividual who has not attained 18 years of age.

5 (11) MOBILE DEVICE.—The term “mobile de-
6 vice” means a phone or general purpose tablet that
7 provides cellular or wireless connectivity, is capable
8 of connecting to the internet, runs a mobile oper-
9 ating system, and is capable of running apps
10 through the mobile operating system.

11 (12) MOBILE OPERATING SYSTEM.—The term
12 “mobile operating system” means a set of software
13 that manages mobile device hardware resources, pro-
14 vides common services for mobile device programs,
15 controls memory allocation, and provides interfaces
16 for applications to access device functionality.

17 (13) PARENT.—The term “parent”, with re-
18 spect to a minor, means an adult with the legal right
19 to make decisions on behalf of the minor, includ-
20 ing—

21 (A) a natural parent;

22 (B) an adoptive parent;

23 (C) a legal guardian; or

24 (D) an individual with legal custody over
25 the minor.

1 (14) PARENTAL ACCOUNT.—The term “paren-
2 tal account” means an account with a covered app
3 store provider that is—

4 (A) verified to be established by an indi-
5 vidual who the app store provider has deter-
6 mined is at least 18 years of age through the
7 covered app store provider’s age verification
8 method or process; and

9 (B) affiliated with one or more account of
10 a user or prospective user who is a minor.

11 (15) PARENTAL CONSENT DISCLOSURE.—The
12 term “parental consent disclosure” means the fol-
13 lowing information that is provided to a parent be-
14 fore obtaining parental consent—

15 (A) a description of—

16 (i) the personal data collected by the
17 app from a user; and

18 (ii) the personal data shared by the
19 app with a third party;

20 (B) a description of the measures taken by
21 the app developer to protect the confidentiality
22 of the user’s personal data;

23 (C) if there is an age rating for the app or
24 an in-app purchase, the app’s or in-app pur-
25 chase’s age rating; and

1 (D) if there is a content description for the
2 app or in-app purchase, the app's or in-app
3 purchase's content description.

4 (16) PERSONAL DATA.—The term “personal
5 data” has the same meaning as the term “personal
6 information” as defined in section 1302 of the Chil-
7 dren's Online Privacy Protection Act (15 U.S.C.
8 6501).

9 (17) SIGNAL.—The term “signal” means age
10 bracketed data sent by a real-time secure application
11 programming interface or operating system that is
12 likely to be accessed by minors.

13 (18) SIGNIFICANT CHANGE.—The term “signifi-
14 cant change” means a material modification of an
15 app's terms of service or privacy policy that—

16 (A) changes the category of data collected
17 or stored;

18 (B) changes the category of data shared
19 with an unaffiliated third party that is not a
20 service provider or processor;

21 (C) alters the app's age rating or content
22 description;

23 (D) adds new monetization features, in-
24 cluding in-app purchases or advertisements; or

1 (E) changes the app’s user experience or
 2 functionality in a manner that a reasonable in-
 3 dividual would view as material.

4 (19) VERIFIABLE PARENTAL CONSENT.—The
 5 term “verifiable parental consent” means authoriza-
 6 tion that is provided—

7 (A) by a parental account;

8 (B) in response to a clear and conspicuous
 9 parental content disclosure; and

10 (C) signifies a parent’s freely given, spe-
 11 cific, informed, and unambiguous agreement.

12 **SEC. 3. APP STORE OBLIGATIONS.**

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—Each covered app store provider
 14 shall—

15 (1) at the time an individual creates an account
 16 with the covered app store provider—

17 (A) request age information from the indi-
 18 vidual; and

19 (B) verify the individual’s age category
 20 using a commercially available method or proc-
 21 ess that is reasonably designed to ensure accu-
 22 racy;

23 (2) if the age verification method or process de-
 24 termines the individual is a minor—

1 (A) require the account to be affiliated
2 with a parental account; and

3 (B) obtain verifiable parental consent from
4 the holder of the affiliated parental account be-
5 fore allowing the minor to download or pur-
6 chase an app or make an in-app purchase;

7 (3) after receiving notice of a significant change
8 from an app developer—

9 (A) notify the user of a significant change;
10 and

11 (B) for a minor account, notify the holder
12 of the affiliated parental account and obtain a
13 new verifiable parental consent;

14 (4) provide to an app developer the user's age
15 category and the status of verified parental consent
16 if the user is a minor;

17 (5) notify an app developer when a parent re-
18 vokes verifiable parental consent;

19 (6) protect the confidentiality of personal data
20 related to age verification by—

21 (A) limiting its collection, processing, and
22 storage to what is strictly necessary to verify a
23 user's age, obtain verifiable parental consent, or
24 maintain compliance records; and

1 (B) safeguarding personal data related to
 2 age verification by adopting reasonable adminis-
 3 trative, technical, and physical safeguards to se-
 4 cure the collection, processing, storage, and
 5 transmission of this data, including through in-
 6 dustry-standard encryption;

7 (7) if a covered app store provider displays an
 8 age rating or description of an app’s content, the
 9 age rating and description must be clearly and
 10 prominently displayed and be in plain and concise
 11 language; and

12 (8) provide to an app developer the ability to
 13 determine, in real time, the age category of any user
 14 and, with respect to any user that is a minor, wheth-
 15 er the covered app store provider has obtained
 16 verifiable parental consent.

17 (b) RULES OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this sec-
 18 tion shall be construed—

19 (1) to prevent a covered app store provider
 20 from taking reasonable measures to block, detect, or
 21 prevent the distribution of unlawful or obscene mate-
 22 rial to minors, to block or filter spam, to prevent
 23 criminal activity, or to protect the security of an app
 24 store or app;

1 (2) to require a covered app store provider to
 2 disclose to an app developer information other than
 3 such user's age category and, with respect to any
 4 user that is a minor, whether the covered app store
 5 provider has obtained verifiable parental consent in
 6 accordance with this section;

7 (3) to allow a covered app store provider to use
 8 any measures required by this section in a way that
 9 is arbitrary, capricious, anti-competitive, or unlaw-
 10 ful; or

11 (4) to affect or restrict the expression of polit-
 12 ical, religious, or other viewpoints.

13 **SEC. 4. APP DEVELOPER OBLIGATIONS.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—An app developer shall—

15 (1) verify through a covered app store's method
 16 or process the age category of the app developer's
 17 users or potential users and, for a minor account,
 18 whether verifiable parental consent has been ob-
 19 tained;

20 (2) notify a covered app store provider of a sig-
 21 nificant change to the app; and

22 (3) request age category data or verifiable pa-
 23 rental consent—

24 (A) at the time a potential app user
 25 downloads or purchases an app;

1 (B) when the app developer implements a
2 significant change to the app; or

3 (C) to comply with an applicable law or
4 regulation.

5 (b) APP DEVELOPER REQUESTS.—An app developer
6 may request age category data or verifiable parental con-
7 sent—

8 (1) no more than once during each 12-month
9 period to verify the accuracy of user age verification
10 data or continued account use within the verified age
11 category;

12 (2) when there is reasonable suspicion of ac-
13 count transfer or misuse outside the verified age cat-
14 egory; or

15 (3) at the time a user creates a new account
16 with the app developer.

17 (c) PERMISSIBLE USES.—An app developer may use
18 age category data to—

19 (1) enforce any app developer-created age-re-
20 lated restrictions;

21 (2) ensure compliance with applicable laws and
22 regulations; and

23 (3) implement any app developer-created fea-
24 tures or defaults.

25 (d) RESTRICTIONS.—An app developer may not—

1 (1) enforce a contract or terms of service
2 against a minor unless the app developer has
3 verified through the covered app store provider that
4 verifiable parental consent has been obtained;

5 (2) knowingly misrepresent any material infor-
6 mation in the parental consent disclosure; or

7 (3) share age category data with an unaffiliated
8 third party that is not a service provider or proc-
9 essor.

10 (e) APP AGE RATING.—If an app developer provides
11 an age rating or description of an app’s content to a cov-
12 ered app store or user, the age rating or description must
13 be in plain and concise language.

14 (f) COVERED APP STORE PROVIDER SIGNAL.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Each app developer shall use
16 a covered app store provider’s signal to determine
17 the age category of a user.

18 (2) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Receipt of a
19 covered app store provider’s signal serves as actual
20 knowledge of a user’s age category.

21 **SEC. 5. COMPLIANCE.**

22 (a) GUIDANCE.—

23 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after
24 the date of enactment of this Act, the Commission
25 shall issue guidance to assist covered app store pro-

1 viders and app developers in complying with the re-
2 quirements of this Act.

3 (2) LIMITATIONS.—

4 (A) NO CONFERRING OF RIGHTS OR BIND-
5 ING EFFECT.—Any guidance issued by the
6 Commission with respect to this Act shall not
7 confer any rights on any person, State, or local-
8 ity, nor shall such guidance operate to bind the
9 Commission or any person to the approach rec-
10 ommended in such guidance.

11 (B) BASIS OF ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS.—

12 In any enforcement action brought pursuant to
13 this Act, the Commission shall allege a specific
14 violation of a provision of this Act. The Com-
15 mission may not base an enforcement action on,
16 or execute a consent order based on, practices
17 that are alleged to be inconsistent with any
18 such guidelines, unless the practices allegedly
19 violate sections 3 or 4.

20 (b) MECHANISM TO CERTIFY COMPLIANCE.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall—

22 (A) establish a mechanism, in such form
23 and manner as the Commission determines is
24 appropriate, for any covered app store provider
25 to submit a request for the Commission to re-

1 view their policies relevant to the requirements
2 under section 3; and

3 (B) not later than 30 days after receiving
4 such a request—

5 (i) review such policies to determine
6 whether the covered app store provider
7 that submitted such request is compliant
8 with such requirements; and

9 (ii) if the Commission determines that
10 such provider is compliant with such re-
11 quirements and does not permit or is able
12 to quickly remedy any method of circum-
13 venting such requirements, submit to Con-
14 gress and make publicly available on the
15 website of the Commission a notice certi-
16 fying that such provider is compliant with
17 such requirements.

18 (2) NOTIFICATION OF SIGNIFICANT
19 CHANGES.—If a covered app store provider that the
20 Commission certifies is compliant with the require-
21 ments of section 3 makes a significant change to any
22 policy of such provider that is relevant to such re-
23 quirements, such provider shall notify the Commis-
24 sion of such change to ensure that the change does

1 not impact the certification of compliance under
2 paragraph (1).

3 (3) PERIOD OF ELIGIBILITY.—A certification of
4 compliance under paragraph (1) shall be valid for 1
5 year after the date of the issuance of such certifi-
6 cation.

7 (c) COMPLAINTS.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall estab-
9 lish a mechanism to receive complaints regarding the
10 compliance of any covered app store provider with
11 the requirements described in section 3.

12 (2) REVIEW.—The Commission shall regularly
13 review any complaints received through the mecha-
14 nism described in paragraph (1) and, if necessary,
15 evaluate the covered app store provider's certifi-
16 cation of compliance under subsection (b)(1).

17 **SEC. 6. ENFORCEMENT BY THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMIS-**
18 **SION.**

19 (a) UNFAIR OR DECEPTIVE ACTS OR PRACTICES.—
20 A violation of this Act or a regulation promulgated there-
21 under shall be treated as a violation of a rule defining
22 an unfair or deceptive act or practice under section
23 18(a)(1)(B) of the Federal Trade Commission Act (15
24 U.S.C. 57a(a)(1)(B)).

25 (b) POWERS OF THE COMMISSION.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall en-
 2 force this Act in the same manner, by the same
 3 means, and with the same jurisdiction, powers, and
 4 duties as though all applicable terms and provisions
 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act (15 U.S.C. 41
 6 et seq.) were incorporated into and made a part of
 7 this Act.

8 (2) PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES.—Any person
 9 who violates this Act or a regulation promulgated
 10 thereunder shall be subject to the penalties and enti-
 11 tled to the privileges and immunities provided in the
 12 Federal Trade Commission Act (15 U.S.C. 41 et
 13 seq.).

14 (3) AUTHORITY PRESERVED.—Nothing in this
 15 Act shall be construed to limit the authority of the
 16 Commission under any other provision of law.

17 **SEC. 7. ENFORCEMENT BY STATES.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—

19 (1) CIVIL ACTIONS.—In any case in which the
 20 attorney general of a State has reason to believe
 21 that an interest of the residents of that State has
 22 been or is threatened or adversely affected by the
 23 engagement of any person in a practice that violates
 24 this Act, the State, as *parens patriae*, may bring a
 25 civil action on behalf of the residents of the State in

1 a district court of the United States of appropriate
2 jurisdiction to—

3 (A) enjoin that practice;

4 (B) enforce compliance with the regulation;

5 (C) obtain damages, restitution, or other
6 compensation on behalf of residents of the
7 State; or

8 (D) obtain such other relief as the court
9 may consider to be appropriate.

10 (2) NOTICE.—

11 (A) IN GENERAL.—Before filing an action
12 under paragraph (1), the attorney general of
13 the State involved shall provide to the Commis-
14 sion—

15 (i) a written notice of that action; and

16 (ii) a copy of the complaint for that
17 action.

18 (B) EXEMPTION.—

19 (i) IN GENERAL.—Subparagraph (A)
20 shall not apply with respect to the filing of
21 an action by an attorney general of a State
22 under this subsection, if the attorney gen-
23 eral determines that it is not feasible to
24 provide the notice described in that sub-
25 paragraph before the filing of the action.

1 (ii) NOTIFICATION.—In an action de-
 2 scribed in clause (i), the attorney general
 3 of a State shall provide notice and a copy
 4 of the complaint to the Commission at the
 5 same time as the attorney general files the
 6 action.

7 (b) INTERVENTION.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—On receiving notice under
 9 subsection (a)(2), the Commission shall have the
 10 right to intervene in the action that is the subject
 11 of the notice.

12 (2) EFFECT OF INTERVENTION.—If the Com-
 13 mission intervenes in an action under subsection (a),
 14 it shall have the right—

15 (A) to be heard with respect to any matter
 16 that arises in that action; and

17 (B) to file a petition for appeal.

18 (c) CONSTRUCTION.—For purposes of bringing any
 19 civil action under subsection (a), nothing in this chapter
 20 shall be construed to prevent an attorney general of a
 21 State from exercising the powers conferred on the attorney
 22 general by the laws of that State to—

23 (1) conduct investigations;

24 (2) administer oaths or affirmations; or

1 (3) compel the attendance of witnesses or the
2 production of documentary and other evidence.

3 (d) ACTIONS BY THE COMMISSION.—In any case in
4 which an action is instituted by or on behalf of the Com-
5 mission for a violation of this Act, no State may, during
6 the pendency of that action, institute an action under sub-
7 section (a) against any defendant named in the complaint
8 in that action for such violation.

9 (e) VENUE; SERVICE OF PROCESS.—

10 (1) VENUE.—Any action brought under sub-
11 section (a) may be brought in the district court of
12 the United States that meets applicable require-
13 ments relating to venue under section 1391 of title
14 28, United States Code.

15 (2) SERVICE OF PROCESS.—In an action
16 brought under subsection (a), process may be served
17 in any district in which the defendant—

18 (A) is an inhabitant; or

19 (B) may be found.

20 **SEC. 8. SAFE HARBOR.**

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—An app developer is deemed not
22 liable for a violation of this Act if the app developer dem-
23 onstrates it has—

24 (1) relied in good faith on age verification data
25 provided by a covered app store provider or it ob-

1 tained a signal from a covered app store provider
2 that indicates the user is a minor;

3 (2) complied with the requirements of section 4;
4 and

5 (3) reasonably conforms to widely accepted in-
6 dustry standards or best practices, or to standards
7 or best practices identified by the Commission, for
8 age ratings and app content descriptions and applies
9 those standards or best practices consistently and in
10 good faith.

11 (b) LIMITATIONS.—The safe harbor described in this
12 section applies only to actions brought under this Act and
13 does not limit the liability of an app developer under any
14 other applicable law.

15 **SEC. 9. PREEMPTION.**

16 (a) IN GENERAL.—No State or political subdivision
17 of a State may maintain, enforce, prescribe, or continue
18 in effect any law, rule, regulation, requirement, standard,
19 or other provision having the force and effect of law of
20 any State, or political subdivision of a State, related to
21 the provisions of this Act.

22 (b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this sub-
23 section shall be construed as preempting, displacing, or
24 supplanting contract or tort law.

1 **SEC. 10. SEVERABILITY.**

2 If any provision of this Act, or the application thereof
3 to any person or circumstance, is held invalid, the remain-
4 der of this Act, and the application of such provision to
5 other persons not similarly situated or to other cir-
6 cumstances, shall not be affected by the invalidation.

7 **SEC. 11. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

8 Except as otherwise provided in this Act, this Act
9 shall take effect on the date that is 1 year after the date
10 of enactment of this Act.

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