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1850 M Street NW
12th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 326-6000
www.naag.org

October 4, 2021

United States Senate
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety, and
Data Security
Russell Senate Office Building, 254
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: "Protecting Kids Online: Facebook, Instagram, and Mental
Health Harms"

Dear Chairman Blumenthal and Ranking Member Blackburn:

The undersigned state Attorneys General write to express our strong support for the hearings being conducted by the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation's Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety, and Data Security regarding "Protecting Kids Online: Facebook, Instagram, and Mental Health Harms." As enforcers of our jurisdictions' consumer protection laws, we find it deeply troubling that Facebook and other social media platforms seek to increase user engagement by conscripting our nation's youth despite known harms to children and adolescents.

We are incensed by recent reports in the Wall Street Journal ("WSJ") and other media outlets, which, if accurate, detail how Facebook has designed its algorithms to attract greater youth engagement. Perhaps more disturbing is the fact that Facebook is doing all of this knowing its own internal studies show the resulting harm – increased mental distress, bullying, contemplation of suicide, and other self-harm – on a significant number of children, with a particularly negative impact on young girls. And Facebook is not alone. WSJ also described how TikTok allows its algorithms to direct young users to pornographic websites depicting violence against women. We are already on

record calling for Facebook to stop (not suspend) its plans to establish an Instagram platform for young children. The WSJ reports only substantiate that position and frankly, call for further efforts.

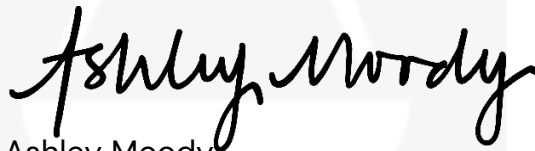
Facebook and other social media platforms understand that their business models necessitate increasing the amount of time that kids engage with their platforms to maximize monetization. More engagement by the user equals more data to leverage for advertising, which equals greater profit. This prompts social media companies to design their algorithms to psychologically manipulate young users into a state of addiction to their cell phone screens. Parents and children seeking a sense of balance and well-being are forced to combat these sophisticated methods seemingly alone. This is simply not a fair fight. When our young people's health becomes mere collateral damage of greater profits for social media companies, it is time for the government to intervene. These hearings are an important start.

We are confident that your hearings will uncover critical information about the business practices that social media companies are using to gain the attention of more young people on their platforms. The matter is urgent. Both the current and future well-being of our nation's youth is at stake. We cannot cede such an important interest to the bottom line of social media companies.

Sincerely,



Rob Bonta
California Attorney General



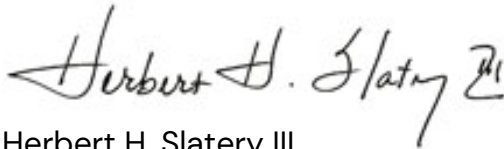
Ashley Moody
Florida Attorney General



Maura Healey
Massachusetts Attorney General



Doug Peterson
Nebraska Attorney General



Herbert H. Slatery III
Tennessee Attorney General



T.J. Donovan
Vermont Attorney General



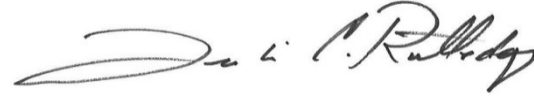
Steve Marshall
Alabama Attorney General



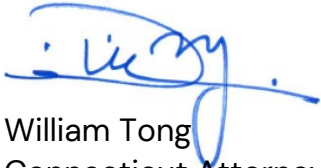
Treg R. Taylor
Alaska Attorney General



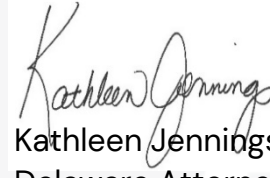
Mark Brnovich
Arizona Attorney General




Leslie Rutledge
Arkansas Attorney General



William Tong
Connecticut Attorney General



Kathleen Jennings
Delaware Attorney General



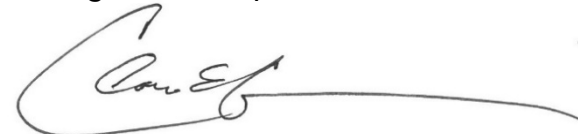
Karl A. Racine
District of Columbia Attorney General



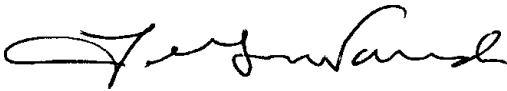
Christopher M. Carr
Georgia Attorney General



Leevin Taitano Camacho
Guam Attorney General



Clare E. Connors
Hawaii Attorney General



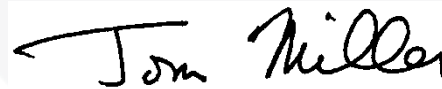
Lawrence Wasden
Idaho Attorney General



Kwame Raoul
Illinois Attorney General



Todd Rokita
Indiana Attorney General



Tom Miller
Iowa Attorney General



Derek Schmidt
Kansas Attorney General



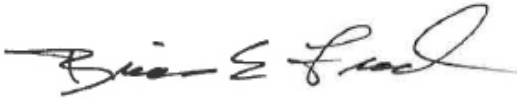
Daniel Cameron
Kentucky Attorney General



Jeff Landry
Louisiana Attorney General



Aaron M. Frey
Maine Attorney General



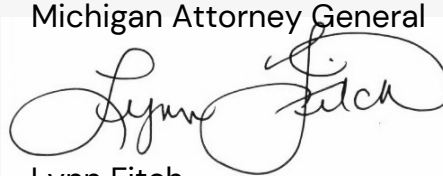
Brian Frosh
Maryland Attorney General



Dana Nessel
Michigan Attorney General



Keith Ellison
Minnesota Attorney General



Lynn Fitch
Mississippi Attorney General



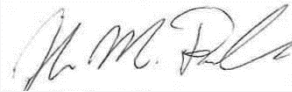
Eric S. Schmitt
Missouri Attorney General



Austin Knudsen
Montana Attorney General



Aaron D. Ford
Nevada Attorney General



John M. Formella
New Hampshire Attorney General



Andrew Bruck
Acting New Jersey Attorney General



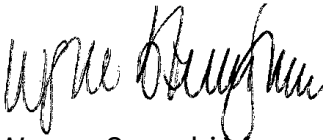
Hector Balderas
New Mexico Attorney General



Letitia James
New York Attorney General



Josh Stein
North Carolina Attorney General



Wayne Stenehjem
North Dakota Attorney General



Edward Manibusan
Northern Mariana Islands Attorney General



Dave Yost
Ohio Attorney General



John O'Connor
Oklahoma Attorney General



Ellen F. Rosenblum
Oregon Attorney General



Domingo Emanuelli-Hernández
Puerto Rico Attorney General



Peter F. Neronha
Rhode Island Attorney General



Alan Wilson
South Carolina Attorney General



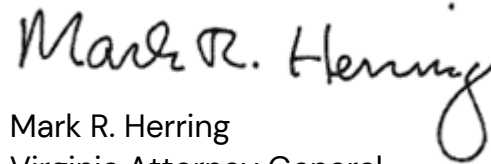
Jason R. Ravensborg
South Dakota Attorney General



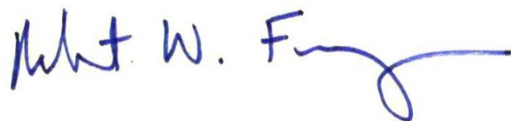
Ken Paxton
Texas Attorney General



Sean D. Reyes
Utah Attorney General



Mark R. Herring
Virginia Attorney General



Robert W. Ferguson
Washington Attorney General



Patrick Morrissey
West Virginia Attorney General



Joshua L. Kaul
Wisconsin Attorney General



Bridget Hill
Wyoming Attorney General