THE APP STORE CHILD PROTECTION ACT

FACT SHEETS

What backers of the App Store Child Protection Act say, in their own words, and what the bill really does.

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THE APP STORE CHILD PROTECTION ACT

What it is, and why it's a bad idea.

It used to be called the App Store Accountability Act. The federal version wasn't getting traction under that name, so its backers renamed it. Same bill. The federal versions are S.1586 (Sen. Mike Lee) and H.R. 3149 (Rep. John James), and versions are already law in Utah, Texas, Louisiana and Alabama.

HOW IT WORKS

01 Everyone who opens a new app store account proves their age. Adults too.

02 A kid's account gets linked to a verified parent.

03 The parent taps "approve" before every new app and purchase.

04 Every app gets told the kid's age range.

WHY IT'S A BAD IDEA

01 IT STOPS AT THE DOOR

Once the app is on the phone, the bill is done. The harm happens later, at midnight, in the feed, the messages and the search bar. The bill touches none of it.

02 THE BROWSER IS WIDE OPEN

A kid can open Safari, Chrome or Firefox, or sit down at any laptop, and log into Instagram, TikTok or a porn site. The bill never touches it.

03 EVERYBODY GETS CHECKED

In Texas, adults opening a new account prove their age with a credit card or a scan of their ID.

04 IT SHIELDS THE APPS

Section 8: an app that relied on the store's age check is "deemed not liable." The excuse writes itself: Mom approved it.

05 IT WIPES OUT STATE LAWS

Section 9 of the federal version bars states from keeping their own laws on the subject.

06 META WANTS IT

Meta, Snap and X cheered Utah's version. Grindr endorsed the federal bill. Bloomberg reported Meta helped fund the campaign.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Once an app is on a kid's phone, what does this bill change?

02 What stops a kid from opening the same site in the web browser?

03 Why do Meta and Grindr support it?

BOTTOM LINE AT MIDNIGHT, THIS BILL ISN'T IN YOUR KID'S ROOM. A PARENT IS.

SOURCES appstoreact.org; H.R. 3149 (as introduced), Secs. 3, 8, 9; S.1586 · Thurrott, June 4, 2026; Bloomberg, July 25, 2025; Grindr, Dec. 2, 2025

Right to Parent · (801) 810-0339 · info@right2parent.org

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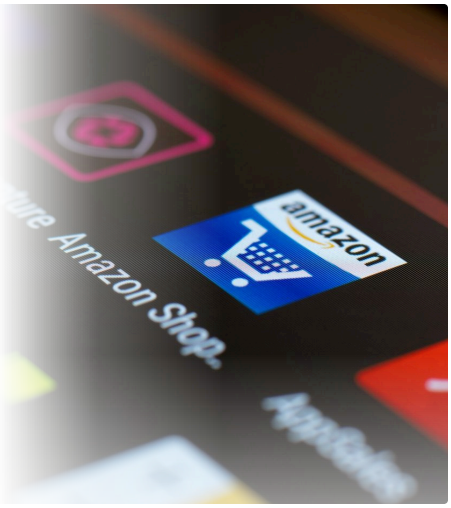
THEY SAY

"No parent can monitor every app, every platform, or every new risk."

Child First Policy Center, appstoreact.org/why-the-app-store



THE FACTS

SO THEIR BILL MAKES YOU APPROVE EVERY APP.

01 Here's how the bill works. When a kid wants a new app, the phone asks the parent first, and the parent taps "approve" or "deny." Parents also have to approve purchases inside apps. In Utah, they have to approve again any time an app makes a big change.

02 So a parent approves the calculator, the weather app and the Bible app the same way they approve Instagram.

03 But tapping "approve" only lets the app onto the phone. It tells the parent nothing about what the app will show their kid next week. And every "approve" gives the company proof that Mom said yes.

PICTURE IT

A
Signing for every package at the front door. By Friday you're signing without reading, and the signature never told you what was in the box.

B
A permission slip for the field trip doesn't tell you what happens on the bus.

C
If your bank texted you to approve every $3 coffee, you'd be hitting "yes" without looking by Wednesday.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 If no parent can watch every app, how does approving every app help?

02 Once an app is on the phone, what does this bill do about what it shows a kid at 11 p.m.?

03 Who keeps the record of the parent's "yes," and could a company use it in court?

BOTTOM LINE **PARENTS ALREADY DO THE WATCHING. THIS BILL HANDS THEM A STACK OF FORMS.**

SOURCES appstoreact.org/why-the-app-store · H.R. 3149, Sec. 3(a)(2) · Utah Code 13-75-201(1)(b)(ii), (1)(c)(ii)(B)

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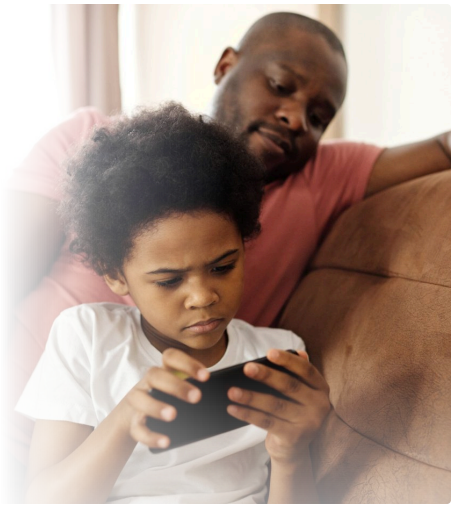
THEY SAY

"Parents are expected to protect their children online—but they're left out of the one decision that matters most: whether an app reaches their child's device."

Child First Policy Center, childfirstpolicy.org



THE FACTS

ASK WHO BOUGHT THE PHONE.

01 The parent already made the biggest choice: whether the kid gets a phone at all.

02 The parent also already controls which apps go on it. Every iPhone and Android phone has a free setting that stops a kid from adding any app until a parent says yes. On iPhone it's called Ask to Buy. On Android it's called Family Link. It works on free apps too, and it takes about five minutes to turn on.

03 That's the same thing the bill promises. It already exists, and nobody has to show an ID to use it.

PICTURE IT

A
Saying parents are left out of what goes on the phone is like saying they're left out of who drives the family car. They bought it. They hold the keys.

B
Your TV already has a parental lock. Nobody needed a law to make the cable company ask before every channel.

C
You don't need a statute to decide who sleeps over at your house.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Who buys a 12-year-old's phone?

02 Ask to Buy and Family Link already make a kid ask before adding an app. What does this bill add?

03 Why should a parent have to prove who they are to get a setting they already have for free?

BOTTOM LINE **THE PERSON WHO BOUGHT THE PHONE ALREADY HAS THE FINAL SAY OVER IT.**

SOURCES childfirstpolicy.org · Ask to Buy (iPhone Family Sharing) and Family Link (Android) require a parent's approval before a child adds an app, including free apps

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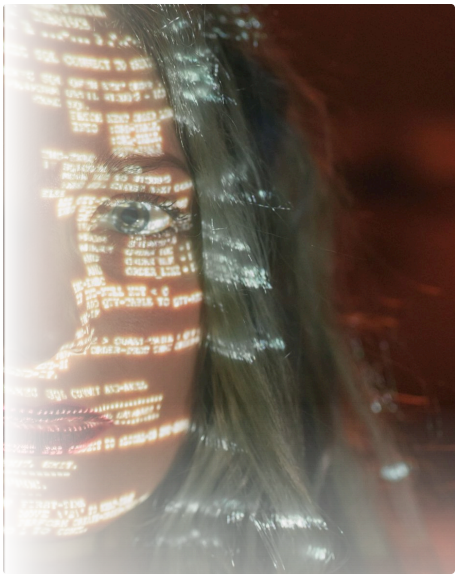
THEY SAY

"The bill allows app stores to use privacy-preserving age verification methods. The goal is to confirm whether a user is a child without collecting unnecessary personal data."

Child First Policy Center, Parent FAQ Guide



THE FACTS

YOU CAN'T CHECK A KID'S AGE WITHOUT CHECKING EVERYONE'S.

01 To know who's a kid, a company has to check who's an adult. That means checking everybody.

02 Meta's August settlement with the states shows what that looks like. Meta now has to check the age of every user in those states, old accounts and new (Sec. II.A.1). The two methods it names are scanning an ID and scanning a face (Sec. II.A.3.b). Australia banned ID-only checks for its under-16 social media law, so companies switched to face scans.

03 The federal bill only asks for a "commercially available method or process" (H.R. 3149, Sec. 3(a)(1)). In plain English, any method a company can buy. "Privacy-preserving" is a phrase from their FAQ page.

PICTURE IT

A
A bouncer who checks that you're 21 without looking at your license.

B
A metal detector that only scans people carrying guns. To find them, it scans everybody.

C
A "private" credit check. Somebody still pulls your file.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 What exact method will the app stores use to check age?

02 What in this bill stops them from using a face scan?

03 How do they confirm the parent is an adult without checking the parent?

BOTTOM LINE **PARENTS DON'T NEED A FACE SCAN TO KNOW HOW OLD THEIR OWN KID IS.**

SOURCES appstoreact.org/parent-faq-guide.pdf · Meta consent judgment (Aug. 2026), Secs. II.A.1, II.A.3.b, via Reclaim The Net and CDT · Reclaim The Net, Dec. 10, 2025 (Australia) · H.R. 3149, Sec. 3(a)(1)

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THEY SAY

"Would this require me to upload my ID to the App Store or Google Play? No. The bill does not require a driver's license, passport, or other government ID."

Child First Policy Center, Parent FAQ Guide

"Good news: the App Store Accountability Act doesn't require uploading government IDs. That's why 88% of parents support it."

Digital Childhood Alliance on X, Oct. 2025

THE FACTS

TRUE ON PAPER. IN TEXAS IT'S A CREDIT CARD OR YOUR ID.

01 Texas started enforcing its version on June 4, 2026. Now when someone in Texas opens a new account on the iPhone app store, they have to prove they're an adult. They can use a credit card or a scan of a government ID. Debit cards don't count.

02 So no, the law doesn't say "driver's license." It says "prove it," and the company picks how. If you don't have a credit card, that means your ID.

03 Utah's sponsor, Sen. Todd Weiler, said a credit card would work. And the parent on a kid's account has to be checked as an adult too (H.R. 3149, Sec. 2(14)(A)).

PICTURE IT

A

"You don't need a driver's license to fly." True. Bring your passport.

B

A bar that brags it doesn't check IDs, then swipes your credit card at the door.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 In Texas, what does an adult without a credit card use?

02 Which ways of checking age does this bill ban?

03 Will a parent have to prove who they are before approving their kid's app?

BOTTOM LINE **PARENTS ALREADY KNOW THEIR KID'S AGE. THE ONLY PEOPLE ASKING FOR YOUR ID ARE THE ONES WHO DON'T.**

SOURCES appstoreact.org/parent-faq-guide.pdf; Digital Childhood Alliance on X · Thurrott, June 4, 2026 (credit card or ID scan; no debit cards; new accounts) · Utah News Dispatch via Route Fifty, Mar. 2025 · Tex. SB 2420; H.R. 3149, Secs. 2(14)(A), 3(a)(1)

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THEY SAY

"The moment an app is installed, it may begin collecting location, browsing activity, device information, contacts, and other personal data—often before parents even know the app is on the device."

Child First Policy Center, childfirstpolicy.org

THE FACTS

THEIR BILL TELLS EVERY APP YOUR KID'S AGE.

01 With Ask to Buy or Family Link turned on, an app can't get onto the phone until a parent says yes. That free setting already stops what they describe.

02 After the parent says yes and the app is on the phone, this bill doesn't limit what the app collects. A legal brief in the Texas case says the law "does not regulate the terms and conditions of app stores or apps on data collection or use."

03 The bill does give every app something new: the kid's age range. Each app has to get it from the app store and use it (H.R. 3149, Sec. 4(f)). The bill's backers call this "anonymous." But the app already knows the phone and the account. Now it also knows the user is 13 to 15.

PICTURE IT

A

A "Baby on Board" sticker every app can read, with the baby's age printed on it.

B

Worried about who's reading your mail, so you write your kid's birthday on the envelope.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Once a parent approves an app, what part of this bill limits what that app collects?

02 How is a kid's age range "anonymous" if the app already knows the phone?

03 Why does a flashlight app need to know a user is 13?

BOTTOM LINE **A PARENT CAN DELETE AN APP TONIGHT. NO BILL REQUIRED.**

SOURCES childfirstpolicy.org; appstoreact.org/for-lawmakers · ICLE amicus brief, *SEAT v. Paxton* / *CCIA v. Paxton* (5th Cir. 2026) · H.R. 3149, Sec. 4(f)

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THEY SAY

"App store pages are built to market apps—not explain risks. They rarely tell parents about data collection, unmoderated chat, or other features that can expose children to harmful content or unwanted contact."

Child First Policy Center, childfirstpolicy.org

THE FACTS

UNDER THEIR BILL, THE APP WRITES ITS OWN WARNING LABEL.

01 Under the bill, the company that makes the app picks its own age rating and writes its own description (H.R. 3149, Sec. 4(e)). If it follows "widely accepted industry standards," it can qualify for a legal shield (Sec. 8(a)). So Instagram rates Instagram.

02 The bill's backers know that's a problem. In May they attacked a different bill for *"Self-reporting with no verification."* Their own bill does the same thing.

03 Nothing else kids watch comes with a risk sheet. Cable TV gives parents a lock. The library gives them a card. Phones already come with a lock.

PICTURE IT

A
Letting the cigarette company write the Surgeon General's warning.

B
Having the used-car dealer fill out the inspection report on his own car.

C
Asking your teenager to grade his own homework.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Who writes the age rating under this bill?

02 You called self-reporting a flaw in another bill. Why is it fine in this one?

03 What happens to a company that rates its app too low but says it followed industry standards?

BOTTOM LINE

THE BEST WARNING LABEL IS A PARENT WHO OPENS THE APP AND LOOKS. IT'S FREE, AND NOBODY CAN LOBBY IT.

SOURCES childfirstpolicy.org · H.R. 3149, Secs. 4(e), 8(a); McDermott Will & Schulte (state laws) · Child First Policy Center Substack, May 7, 2026

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THEY SAY

"What Parents Gain: The authority to review real risks and make decisions before data is collected or algorithms take hold. No more finding out after the damage is done."

Child First Policy Center, appstoreact.org/the-bill

THE FACTS

THE DANGER STARTS AFTER THE APP IS ON THE PHONE.

01 The bill deals with one moment: when the app first goes on the phone. The harm happens later, like at midnight, when a 14-year-old is still in bed scrolling Instagram. By then the bill is done. It also never touches the web browser. A kid can open Safari, Chrome or Firefox, or log in on a laptop, and get to the same sites.

02 The Digital Childhood Alliance shared a CNN story about TikTok searches showing porn to 13-year-olds and said their bill would stop that "at the point of download." But the porn showed up when kids searched inside TikTok, after it was already on the phone.

03 The new version adds a parent OK before a kid gets a feed picked by the app, and it shuts off notifications at bedtime and during school. Meta already agreed to those notification rules in its August settlement. That same day a Meta official told Axios: *"It would be better to have this done by a legislature, which can immediately bind all of our competitors to the same rules."*

PICTURE IT

A
A ticket-taker at the theater who never checks what's on the screen.

B
Checking the guest list at the door while the party upstairs runs till 3 a.m.

C
Locking the front door while the back door and every window stay open.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Once the app is on the phone, which part of this bill changes what it shows a 14-year-old at 11 p.m.?

02 The TikTok porn showed up in search, after the app was on the phone. How would this bill have stopped it?

03 Meta already agreed to these notification rules. Why does Meta want them in state law?

BOTTOM LINE **PARENTS DECIDE WHERE THE PHONE SLEEPS AT NIGHT. NO STATUTE GETS A VOTE.**

SOURCES appstoreact.org/the-bill · Digital Childhood Alliance on X, Oct. 2025 (sharing CNN) · Public Knowledge, Aug. 31, 2026 · Axios, Aug. 26, 2026

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THEY SAY

"The Failing Approach: Trying to regulate thousands of individual apps, obscure websites, offshore game developers, and fast-moving AI companies one by one."

Child First Policy Center, appstoreact.org/why-the-app-store

THE FACTS

THE LAWSUITS NAME A FEW APPS. THEIR BILL COVERS ALL OF THEM.

01 Fifty-two attorneys general signed onto Meta's August settlement over Instagram and Facebook, worth up to $16.7 billion. States have sued Snap and TikTok too. The harm keeps coming from the same few apps.

02 This bill puts the same rule on every app, from a flashlight to Instagram. Once Instagram is on the phone, the bill leaves it alone. It even gives app companies a legal shield. If they relied "in good faith" on the age the app store gave them, they're "deemed not liable for a violation of this Act" (H.R. 3149, Sec. 8(a)). You can guess the company's excuse: Mom approved it.

03 Meta spent a record $26.29 million lobbying Congress in 2025.

PICTURE IT

A
One restaurant poisons the town, so the town puts a health inspector at every grocery checkout. The restaurant keeps cooking.

B
A drunk driver causes a wreck, and the fix is a breathalyzer at every gas pump.

C
Keeping the whole class in at recess because one kid threw the eraser.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Which apps are named in the lawsuits our attorney general joined? What does this bill change about them once they're on a kid's phone?

02 Section 8 says app companies that relied on the app store's age check are "deemed not liable." Then who is responsible?

03 Meta cheered when Utah passed this. Why would Meta want it?

BOTTOM LINE **MAKE THE COMPANIES THAT BUILT THE HARM PAY FOR IT. PARENTS CAN HANDLE THE REST.**

SOURCES appstoreact.org/why-the-app-store · Meta consent judgment (Aug. 2026), cap $16,680,647,753.21 · H.R. 3149, Sec. 8(a) · Meta federal lobbying, 2025 (LDA filings)

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THEY SAY

"Parents—not Big Tech—decide what reaches their child."

Child First Policy Center, childfirstpolicy.org

"Do you take money from Big Tech? No. We do not accept funding from Apple, Google, Meta, or other major tech companies."

Child First Policy Center, Parent FAQ Guide

THE FACTS

BIG TECH USED THAT LINE FIRST.

01 When Utah passed the first version in March 2025, Meta, Snap and X put out a joint statement: *"We applaud Utah for putting parents in charge with its landmark legislation and urge Congress to follow suit."* Pinterest endorsed the federal bill that December, and so did Grindr, the adults-only hookup app. Pornhub's parent company, Aylo, has lobbied for age checks done by the app stores and phone makers instead of by porn sites.

02 Bloomberg reported in July 2025 that Meta was helping pay for the Digital Childhood Alliance, the group that ran the first state campaigns for this bill. Bloomberg cited three people familiar with the funding.

03 The Child First Policy Center says it takes no Big Tech money. Maybe so. But the people overlap. Melissa McKay founded the Alliance, and her Digital Childhood Institute now sits at the top of the Center's list of supporters. The Alliance featured the Center's director, Corinne Johnson, as one of its "Voices for App Store Accountability." NCOSE, Family Policy Alliance and Heritage are on that list too. Good people get played.

PICTURE IT

A
When the tobacco companies cheer a smoking law, read it twice.

B
The fox endorsing the new lock on the henhouse.

C
A casino lobbying hard for a gambling "reform" bill.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Why do Meta, Pornhub and Grindr all want this bill?

02 Has any group supporting this bill received money from Meta?

03 A Meta official said a legislature can "immediately bind all of our competitors." Which competitors does this bill bind?

BOTTOM LINE **WHEN META, PORNHUB AND GRINDR ALL LIKE A CHILD SAFETY BILL, PARENTS SHOULD ASK WHY.**

SOURCES Meta, Snap and X joint statement, Mar. 2025 (Business Insider; CNBC) · Grindr, "Grindr Supports the U.S. App Store Accountability Act," Dec. 2, 2025 · Wired, Nov. 2025, and AdultFYI, July 29, 2026 (Aylo letters) · Office of Sen. Mike Lee, May 2025 and Dec. 1, 2025 · Bloomberg, July 25, 2025 · appstoreact.org; digitalchildhoodalliance.org · Axios, Aug. 26, 2026

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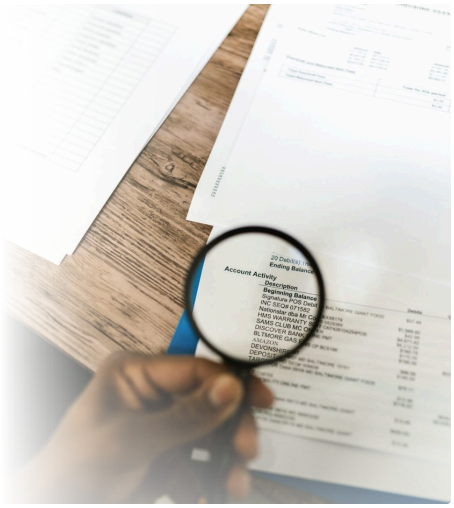
THEY SAY

"When federal legislation preempts stronger state laws, it doesn't create a floor. It creates a ceiling."

Child First Policy Center Substack, "They Named It 'Parents Over Platforms.' Read the Fine Print." May 7, 2026



THE FACTS

GOOD ADVICE. NOW READ THEIR BILL.

01 In May the bill's backers attacked a different federal bill, the Parents Over Platforms Act, for three things. It wiped out state laws. It protected companies from being held responsible. And it let companies grade themselves. They told people to support their bill instead. Their federal bill (H.R. 3149, as first introduced) does all three.

02 It wipes out state laws. Section 9(a) says no state may *"maintain, enforce, prescribe, or continue in effect any law"* related to the bill. Lawyers call this preemption. The backers called it "a ceiling."

03 It protects companies. Section 8(a): *"An app developer is deemed not liable for a violation of this Act"* if it relied on the app store's age check. Instagram is an app developer.

04 It lets companies grade themselves. Under Section 4(e) the company writes its own age rating. The backers' phrase for that was "self-reporting with no verification."

PICTURE IT

A
A food critic trashes the soup, then finds out it's his recipe.

B
A guy complains his neighbor's fence is a foot over the line while his own garage sits on the neighbor's lawn.

C
A cop writing speeding tickets at 80 miles an hour.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 You said a federal bill shouldn't wipe out stronger state laws. Why does the federal bill you support do that in Section 9?

02 Section 8 protects app companies from being held liable. Does that include Meta?

03 You called self-grading a flaw. Who writes the age ratings under this bill?

BOTTOM LINE **THIS BILL'S FINE PRINT PROTECTS APP COMPANIES. ONLY PARENTS PROTECT KIDS.**

Citations are to H.R. 3149 as first introduced. Check the committee-amended text before using on the floor.

SOURCES Child First Policy Center Substack, May 7, 2026 · H.R. 3149 (119th Cong.), as introduced, Secs. 4(e), 8(a), 9(a)

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THEY SAY

"Supreme Court Rules In Favor of Texas App Store Accountability Act, Delivering Major Win for Texas Families"

Digital Childhood Alliance, headline, July 2026

"After the Supreme Court decision this should be a no brainer."

Child First Policy Center Substack, Oct. 14, 2026

THE FACTS

THE SUPREME COURT DIDN'T RULE ON IT.

01 On July 6, 2026, the Supreme Court said Texas can keep enforcing its law while the court fight goes on. That's all it said. It gave no reasons and didn't decide whether the law is constitutional.

02 That decision belongs to a lower appeals court, the Fifth Circuit. It heard arguments in August and, as of this writing, hasn't made a final decision.

03 So far one federal judge in Austin, Robert Pitman, said the law likely violates free speech. He compared it to carding every customer at a bookstore door. Three appeals judges said Texas will likely win. That's one ruling each way, and nothing final.

04 The version being pushed now also has rules about feeds and notifications that aren't in the Texas law. No court has looked at those.

PICTURE IT

A
Getting a trial date isn't a verdict.

B
The ref won't stop the clock in the second quarter, and somebody on the sideline starts celebrating.

C
Being allowed to stay in the house while the lawsuit plays out doesn't mean you own the house.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Did the Supreme Court decide whether this law is constitutional?

02 Has the Fifth Circuit made a final decision?

03 Has any court reviewed the feed and notification rules in this version?

BOTTOM LINE

PARENTS WERE IN CHARGE OF THEIR KIDS' PHONES BEFORE TEXAS PASSED ANYTHING, AND THEY STILL ARE.

SOURCES digitalchildhoodalliance.org (July 2026); CFPC Substack, Oct. 14, 2026 · Sup. Ct. Nos. 25A1389, 25A1390 (July 6, 2026); Texas Public Radio · *CCIA v. Paxton* (W.D. Tex. Dec. 23, 2025); *SEAT v. Paxton* (5th Cir. June 4, 2026) (stay order)

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THE FACTS

THEIR ANALOGIES DON'T HOLD UP.

01

"The App Store Accountability Act holds Big Tech companies to the same standard as local corner stores."

Rep. John James (R-MI), May 2025

WHY THIS ANALOGY DOESN'T WORK

This analogy falls apart because a corner store only cards you for the few things that are dangerous to kids, like cigarettes and beer. It sells you bread, milk and a newspaper without a word. This bill makes everyone prove their age before downloading anything at all, from the weather app to the Bible app. A store also doesn't call the cigarette company to say a 14-year-old just walked in, but this bill sends every app your kid's age. And a cigarette is the harm itself. An app download isn't. The harm is what the app shows your kid later, at midnight, and the bill never looks at that.

What it really is: A store that cards every customer for every item, then tells the manufacturers which customers are kids.

02

"A parent-led movement advancing common-sense safeguards at the digital front door."

Child First Policy Center, appstoreact.org

WHY THIS ANALOGY DOESN'T WORK

This analogy falls apart because a phone doesn't have one door. The app store is one way in. The web browser is another, and it's wide open: a kid can open Safari, Chrome or Firefox and log into Instagram, TikTok or a porn site without touching the app store. So can a laptop, a library computer, a school Chromebook or a friend's phone. And even at the front door, the bill only checks who walks in. It never looks at what happens inside the house at midnight.

What it really is: A lock on the front door of a house with the back door and every window wide open.

03

"App stores are the digital gatekeepers of our children's lives."

Casey Stefanski, Digital Childhood Alliance, May 2025

WHY THIS ANALOGY DOESN'T WORK

This analogy falls apart because a real gatekeeper protects the people inside. Under this bill, the app store collects everyone's age and then passes your kid's age range to every app your kid uses (Section 4(f)). That doesn't guard your kid. It tells every company on the other side of the gate exactly who's a child.

What it really is: A guard who checks everyone's ID at the gate, then hands the guest list, with the kids' ages, to everyone inside.

04

"Every child's best online safety feature is an informed parent."

Child First Policy Center

WHERE WE AGREE

They're right, and that's the problem with their bill. An informed parent already decides whether a kid gets a phone, what goes on it and where it charges at night. None of that requires a credit card on file with a tech company or a scan of the parent's ID. Making a parent prove who they are to a corporation before approving a weather app doesn't make anyone better informed.

What it really is: Their own best line, and the strongest case against their bill.

THE JUDGE'S ANALOGY

"The Act is akin to a law that would require every bookstore to verify the age of every customer at the door and, for minors, require parental consent before the child or teen could enter and again when they try to purchase a book."

U.S. District Judge Robert Pitman, *CCIA v. Paxton*, Dec. 23, 2025

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 The corner store doesn't card you for bread. Why does this bill card you for a calculator app?

02 If you lock the front door, what stops a kid from opening Safari, Chrome or Firefox and logging in anyway?

03 If an informed parent is the best safety feature, why does the parent need to prove their age?

BOTTOM LINE THEIR BEST LINE IS TRUE. A KID'S BEST SAFETY FEATURE IS A PARENT. THAT'S THE CASE AGAINST THIS BILL.

SOURCES Office of Rep. John James, May 1, 2025; Office of Rep. Gus Bilirakis, May 2, 2025 · appstoreact.org; H.R. 3149, Sec. 4(f) · *CCIA v. Paxton* (W.D. Tex. Dec. 23, 2025)

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THEY SAY

"This campaign is parent-led and supported by families, child-safety advocates, and grassroots donors."

Child First Policy Center, Parent FAQ Guide

THE FACTS

HERE'S WHO ELSE IS ON THE LIST.

SPONSORS	Sen. Mike Lee (S.1586) and Rep. John James (H.R. 3149) in Congress. Sen. Todd Weiler wrote Utah's version. Sen. Angela Paxton carried the one in Texas.
THE CAMPAIGN	The Digital Childhood Alliance ran the first state campaigns. Bloomberg reported in July 2025 that Meta was helping fund it. The Child First Policy Center now runs the renamed version. At the top of its supporter list: the Digital Childhood Institute, led by the Alliance's founder, Melissa McKay.
THE CHEERING SECTION	Meta, Snap and X put out a joint statement cheering Utah's law. Pinterest and Grindr endorsed the federal bill. Pornhub's parent company has lobbied for age checks run by app stores and phone makers.
WHO PAYS	The device makers run the checks. Adults hand over a credit card or an ID. Parents get a permission request for every app. The platforms change nothing.

PICTURE IT

A
A neighborhood watch paid for by the burglar.

B
A diet campaign sponsored by the donut shop.

C
When the tobacco companies cheer a smoking law, read it twice.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Who wrote the model bill, and who paid for the campaign behind it?

02 Why do Meta, Snap, X, Pinterest and Grindr all like this bill?

03 Who pays the cost when it passes, and who doesn't?

BOTTOM LINE **FOLLOW WHO CHEERS AND WHO PAYS. THE PLATFORMS CHEER. EVERYBODY ELSE PAYS.**

SOURCES appstoreact.org/parent-faq-guide.pdf; appstoreact.org (supporters) · Office of Sen. Mike Lee, May 2025; Office of Rep. John James, May 1, 2025 · Utah News Dispatch, Mar. 2025; Digital Childhood Alliance on X (SB 2420) · Bloomberg, July 25, 2025; Meta, Snap and X joint statement, Mar. 2025 · Office of Sen. Lee, Dec. 1, 2025 (Pinterest); Grindr, Dec. 2, 2025; Wired, Nov. 2025 (Aylo)

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THEY SAY

"Rather than writing separate laws for social media, then gaming, then messaging apps, the app store captures them all at the single point of entry."

Child First Policy Center, appstoreact.org/why-the-app-store

THE FACTS

THE BROWSER IS A SECOND DOOR, AND IT'S WIDE OPEN.

01 Every phone comes with a web browser. Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, X and porn sites all work in it. No app download needed.

02 This bill only covers apps people download from an app store. So a kid whose parent says no to the Instagram app can open Safari, Chrome or Firefox on the same phone and log in at instagram.com.

03 Or log in on the family computer, a laptop, a library computer, a school Chromebook or a friend's phone. There is no "single point of entry." There never was.

PICTURE IT

A
A lock on the cookie jar while the cookies sit on the counter.

B
Carding people at the bar's front door while the patio opens onto the street.

C
A fence on three sides of the yard.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Does this bill do anything about the web browser on the same phone?

02 If a parent says no to Instagram, what stops the kid from opening instagram.com?

03 Which porn sites need an app to reach a kid?

BOTTOM LINE

PARENTS CAN LOCK THE BROWSER TODAY WITH THE FREE SETTINGS ON EVERY PHONE. THIS BILL DOESN'T EVEN TRY.

SOURCES appstoreact.org/why-the-app-store · H.R. 3149, Sec. 2 (app store definition: downloads onto a mobile device)

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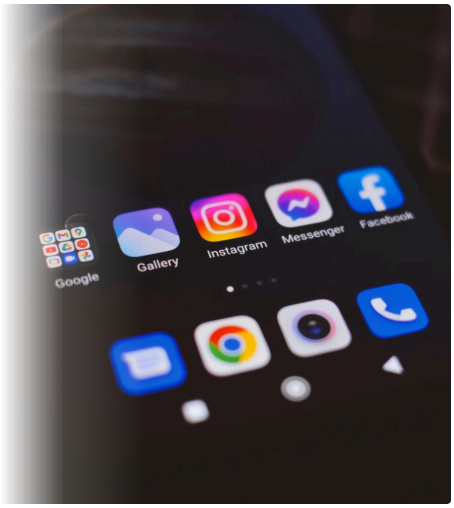
THEY SAY

"The app store is the best place for it."

Meta, Snap and X, joint statement on Utah's law, March 2025



THE FACTS

META ALREADY KNOWS HOW OLD YOUR KID IS.

01 Meta asks for your birthday when you sign up. It says it uses a teen's age and location to decide which ads to show them. And it says it's building technology to catch teens who claim to be adults.

02 Its own files show how much it pays attention to age. A 2018 Meta youth plan was built around three groups: "Kids, Tweens, and Teens." Another plan tested whether "school blasts" could get a whole high school onto the platform.

03 In its August 2026 settlement, Meta agreed to check its users' ages itself (Sec. II.A.1). So when a witness says the app store is better at it, that's a company asking someone else to do a job it already agreed to do.

PICTURE IT

A

The bartender says it's the liquor store's job to card people. He's been pouring all night.

B

A store that keeps your kid's birthday on file, sends a coupon every year, then says it has no idea how old he is.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Does Meta know the ages of its users?

02 Meta agreed in August to check ages itself. Why should the app store do it instead?

03 Who gains when the age check becomes someone else's problem?

BOTTOM LINE **META KNOWS EXACTLY WHO YOUR KID IS. THIS BILL LETS IT PRETEND IT DOESN'T.**

SOURCES Business Insider and CNBC, Mar. 2025 (joint statement) · Meta, teen ad policy (age and location only) · MediaNama, Feb. 26, 2026 (K.G.M. trial exhibits 45 and 54) · Meta consent judgment (Aug. 2026), Sec. II.A.1

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THEY SAY

"It requires app stores to verify whether a user is a child using privacy-preserving methods that collect the minimum information necessary."

Child First Policy Center, Parent FAQ Guide

THE FACTS

THE MINIMUM IS STILL YOUR ID, AND ID FILES LEAK.

01 In Texas, the minimum is a credit card or a scan of your government ID. Meta's settlement names ID checks and face scans.

02 Every one of those checks leaves a file somewhere. Files get stolen. In October 2025, Discord said about 70,000 photo IDs that users had sent in for age checks were exposed in a breach at one of its vendors. In July 2025, the app Tea said about 13,000 selfies and photo IDs that users submitted to verify their accounts were exposed.

03 This bill makes those files for every adult who opens a new app store account in the state.

PICTURE IT

A
A shoebox full of everyone's house keys, each one labeled with the address.

B
Hiding a spare key under the mat and telling the whole town which mat.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Who stores the ID or credit card data, and for how long?

02 Who's liable when that data is stolen?

03 What does a family get in return for the risk?

BOTTOM LINE **EVERY ID CHECK MAKES A FILE. EVERY FILE IS A TARGET.**

SOURCES appstoreact.org/parent-faq-guide.pdf · Thurrott, June 4, 2026 (Texas) · Meta consent judgment (Aug. 2026), Sec. II.A.3.b · The Register, Oct. 9, 2025 (Discord) · Associated Press, July 26, 2025 (Tea)

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THEY SAY

"the right path forward for our whole industry"

Meta Chief Legal Officer C.J. Mahoney, on Meta's settlement with the states, Aug. 26, 2026

THE FACTS

META ALREADY SIGNED THIS DEAL, AND IT'S WORSE.

01 Meta's August settlement with 52 attorneys general requires age checks for every Instagram and Facebook user in the settling states, new accounts and old (Sec. II.A.1, II.A.6.a.i). The methods it names are ID checks and face scans (Sec. II.A.3.b). Users who aren't checked within 14 days get treated as teens: a two-hour daily cap and a midnight to 6 a.m. lockout (Sec. II.A.10).

02 It also commits Meta to using age signals from phones and app stores. That's this bill's setup, delivered by a settlement nobody voted on. Meta keeps the right to sue over any other age verification law, and gives up the right to challenge this one (Sec. X.E, X.F).

03 Meta's official told Axios that day that a legislature is better because it "can immediately bind all of our competitors to the same rules."

PICTURE IT

A
The defendant writes his own sentence, then asks the judge to give it to his competitors too.

B
A fine that raises your stock price is a business plan.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 If the settlement already uses app store age signals, what does this bill add?

02 Why does Meta want its settlement terms written into law for its competitors?

03 Who voted on the settlement's ID checks?

BOTTOM LINE **THIS IS WHAT THESE BILLS LOOK LIKE WHEN THEY WIN. IT'S ALREADY SIGNED.**

SOURCES ESG Dive, Aug. 26, 2026 (Mahoney) · Meta consent judgment (Aug. 2026), Secs. II.A.1, II.A.3.b, II.A.6.a.i, II.A.10, X.E, X.F, via Reclaim The Net · CDT, "To Comply with its Settlement, Meta Will Have to Age-Verify Everyone" · Axios, Aug. 26, 2026

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THEY SAY

"It is less dependent on parents mastering every new platform's unique hidden settings."

Child First Policy Center, appstoreact.org/why-the-app-store

THE FACTS

THEIR BILL ADDS A SETTING AND LEAVES THE FEED ALONE.

01 Parents already have the settings that matter, and they're free. Ask to Buy on iPhone and Family Link on Android stop new apps until a parent says yes. The same tools set time limits, block websites and shut the phone down at bedtime.

02 This bill doesn't replace any of that. It adds a new verified parent account, a permission request for every app and another one every time an app changes.

03 What parents really can't control is the feed: endless scroll, autoplay and recommendations built to keep a kid watching. This bill never touches it.

PICTURE IT

A

A second key to a door you already lock.

B

A babysitter app that texts you every time she opens the fridge and never tells you what's on TV.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Which existing parental control does this bill replace?

02 What new steps does it add for parents?

03 What does it change about the feed?

BOTTOM LINE

PARENTS DON'T NEED MORE PAPERWORK. THEY NEED THE COMPANIES HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT THEY BUILT.

SOURCES appstoreact.org/why-the-app-store · Utah Code 13-75-201 (consent and renewed consent); H.R. 3149, Secs. 2(14)(A), 3(a)(2) · Ask to Buy and Screen Time (iPhone); Family Link (Android)

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THEY SAY

"Nothing in this Act shall be construed to require... a covered platform to implement an age gating or age verification functionality."

Kids Online Safety Act, rule of construction

THE FACTS

IT DOESN'T SAY "CHECK IDS." IT JUST MAKES PLATFORMS PAY IF THEY GUESS WRONG.

01 The Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA) puts a legal duty on platforms toward users they "know" are minors, including knowledge "fairly implied on the basis of objective circumstances." If a platform can be punished for what it should have figured out, the safe move is to check everybody. The Congressional Research Service notes critics make exactly that argument.

02 Sen. Rand Paul blocked a fast-track vote on September 30, 2026, on those grounds. The House passed its own package, the KIDS Act, 267 to 117 in June. It drops KOSA's duty of care and requires age verification for sites heavy with sexual content. In May, 44 state attorneys general signed a letter opposing it.

03 And Axios reported Meta dropped its opposition to KOSA this year as part of a deal that would have put age checks on the app stores.

PICTURE IT

A
A store that's liable for any minor it "should have known" about. So it cards everyone.

B
A speed limit that says "drive at a speed you should have known was safe." Everybody gets a ticket eventually.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 If KOSA doesn't require age checks, how does a platform prove it didn't "know" a user was 15?

02 Why did Meta drop its opposition to KOSA?

03 Who decides what counts as harmful under the duty of care?

BOTTOM LINE

A LAW THAT ONLY WORKS IF PLATFORMS CHECK EVERYONE'S AGE IS AN ID LAW WITH A DIFFERENT NAME.

SOURCES KOSA rule of construction and "knows" definition (Fairplay legal analysis, Oct. 4, 2023) · CRS Legal Sidebar LSB11465, "The House Passes the KIDS Act," Aug. 3, 2026 · Tech Times, Oct. 6, 2026 (Sen. Paul objection; S.1748) · Wikipedia, KIDS Act (May 2026 attorneys general letter) · Axios, Aug. 26, 2026

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THEY SAY

"Kids agree to legal terms that waive rights without understanding."

Child First Policy Center, appstoreact.org

THE FACTS

THE LAW ALREADY PROTECTS KIDS FROM CONTRACTS.

01 Across the country, a contract signed by a minor can be undone by the minor. The standard rule: a person has the capacity to take on "only voidable contractual duties" until they turn 18.

02 So a 13-year-old clicking "I agree" isn't signing away much. The real problem was never the fine print. It's what the app shows the kid after the click.

03 Under this bill, the parent gives consent instead. That leaves the company holding an adult's approval on file.

PICTURE IT

A
Worrying about a kid signing a lease he can walk away from while he's in the house with a stranger.

B
Reading the warranty card while the toaster's on fire.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Can a company enforce a contract against a 13-year-old today?

02 What changes for the company once a parent clicks "I agree" instead?

03 How does moving the click protect a kid from what the app shows them?

BOTTOM LINE

KIDS DON'T NEED A NEW SIGNATURE LINE. THEY NEED THE PRODUCT TO STOP HURTING THEM.

SOURCES appstoreact.org ("Digital Contracts") · Restatement (Second) of Contracts, Sec. 14

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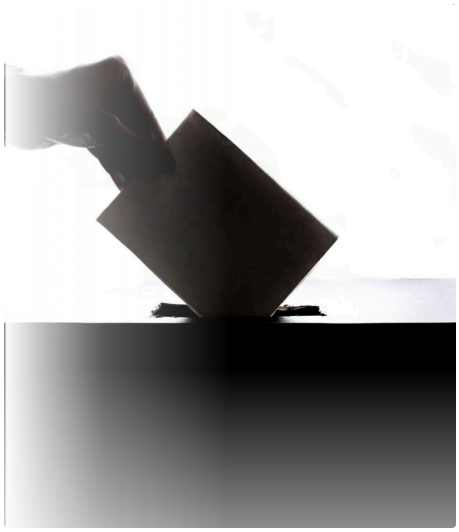
THEY SAY

"88% of parents support requiring app stores to obtain parental approval."

Digital Childhood Alliance on X, May 1, 2025



THE FACTS

PARENTS ALREADY HAVE THAT. ASK WHAT THE POLL LEFT OUT.

01 As the backers describe it, the poll asked parents whether app stores should require a parent's approval before a kid downloads an app. Every iPhone and Android phone can already do that for free.

02 The Digital Childhood Alliance commissioned the poll. Bloomberg reported Meta was helping fund the Alliance.

03 Later the Alliance wrote that the bill "doesn't require uploading government IDs. That's why 88% of parents support it." In Texas, adults now prove their age with a credit card or a scan of their ID.

PICTURE IT

A

Ask people if they want safer cars and 88% say yes. Ask if they'll hand over their license to buy a cup holder.

B

A poll on whether you'd like free dessert, paid for by the bakery.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 Can we see the poll's exact questions?

02 Did it ask parents whether they'd hand over a credit card or ID to download an app?

03 Who paid for it?

BOTTOM LINE

PARENTS WANT TO BE IN CHARGE. THEY ALREADY ARE. THAT'S NOT A VOTE FOR AN ID CHECKPOINT.

SOURCES Digital Childhood Alliance on X (May 1, 2025; Oct. 2025) · Office of Rep. John James, May 1, 2025 (poll description) · Bloomberg, July 25, 2025 · Thurrott, June 4, 2026

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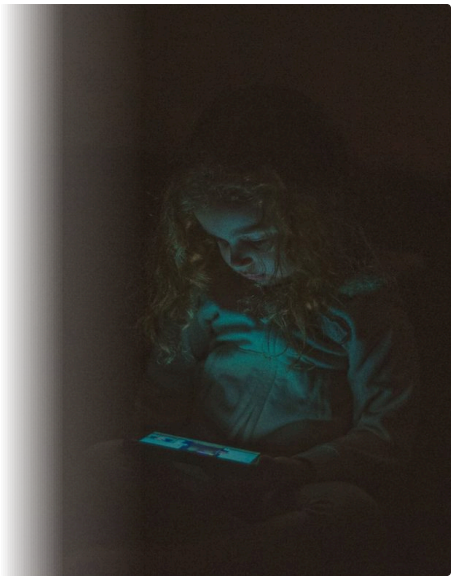
THEY SAY

"Every one of these stories started with an app."

Child First Policy Center, appstoreact.org (headlines on sextortion, drugs, predators and violence)



THE FACTS

EVERY ONE OF THOSE STORIES HAPPENED AFTER THE APP WAS ON THE PHONE.

01 Read the stories they link. A 17-year-old gets more than 200 messages from a stranger on Instagram. Families say their kids bought fentanyl from dealers they found on Snapchat. Teens meet adults on a social app.

02 None of that happened at the download. It happened in the messages, the search bar and the friend suggestions, inside apps parents approve for teenagers every day.

03 Their bill stops before any of it starts.

PICTURE IT

A
Blaming the front door for a break-in that came through the window.

B
Checking a kid's ticket at the ballpark gate and never looking at who sits next to him.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

01 In the stories you cite, where did the harm happen: at the download or inside the app?

02 Would a parent's approval have stopped a stranger from sending messages?

03 Which part of this bill changes who can message a kid?

BOTTOM LINE **THE DANGER IS INSIDE THE APP. HOLD THE COMPANIES THAT RUN IT RESPONSIBLE.**

SOURCES appstoreact.org (homepage stories: Fox News, NBC News, New York Post, AP)

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