



April 8, 2026

The Honorable Chairwoman Jacquelyn Baginski  
Honorable Members of the House Innovation, Internet & Technology  
Room 135- State House  
Providence, RI 02903

My name is Beth Bixby, and I am the CEO of Tides Family Services. We serve children, adolescents, and families across Rhode Island through behavioral health, juvenile justice, child welfare, and Mobile Response and Stabilization Services. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding H7953.

In our daily work with children and adolescents, we are increasingly seeing the impact that unregulated social media use can have on youth mental health. Many of the young people we serve struggle with anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, low self-esteem, and exposure to harmful or developmentally inappropriate content—challenges that are often exacerbated by early and unsupervised access to social media platforms.

Research and clinical experience alike point to a strong connection between excessive social media use and worsening behavioral health outcomes, particularly for younger adolescents whose brains are still developing. Youth are especially vulnerable to cyberbullying, social comparison, and algorithm-driven content that can reinforce negative thought patterns or risky behaviors.

While parents and caregivers play a critical role in monitoring their children's online activity, they cannot do it alone. The current landscape places an unfair burden on families to navigate complex and rapidly evolving technologies without adequate safeguards. This legislation helps rebalance that responsibility.

From a behavioral health perspective, prevention is key. Reducing early exposure to potentially harmful online environments can mitigate the need for more intensive mental health interventions later. Policies like H7953 support healthier developmental trajectories and align with broader efforts to promote youth well-being across Rhode Island.

We recognize that implementation will require thoughtful consideration, particularly around privacy, enforcement, and equitable access. We encourage continued collaboration with stakeholders, including behavioral health providers, educators, and families, to ensure the law is implemented effectively and responsibly.

We respectfully urge the Committee to support H7953 as an important step toward safeguarding the mental health of Rhode Island's children and adolescents.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Beth A. Bixby, LICSW  
Chief Executive Officer  
Tides Family Services