



4/8/2026

The Honorable Jacquelyn M. Baginski
Chair, House Committee on Innovation, Internet & Technology
State of Rhode Island Senate
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support of H7953 – The Rhode Island Social Media Regulation Act

Chair Baginski and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of H7953, legislation that would create the Rhode Island Social Media Regulation Act. This bill would require parental or guardian consent before a minor can hold an account on a social media platform and would establish additional safeguards to help protect young people from online harm.

My name is Margaret Holland McDuff, and I am CEO of Family Service of Rhode Island (FSRI). FSRI is a behavioral health and social service organization with the mission “to advance hope and opportunity in our communities.” We have been serving Rhode Island children, families and communities for over a century, including programming to support healthy child development, to provide essential behavioral health services, and to coordinate crisis intervention programs that help children and families thrive.

At FSRI, we see every day how quickly technology is shaping the lives of children and families, and how far behind our systems are in protecting them. The data is clear and deeply concerning. Nearly one in three teenage girls report considering suicide, and rates of anxiety and depression among children and adolescents have risen sharply over the past decade. At the same time, young people are spending, on average, nine hours a day online, often in environments that remain largely unregulated and increasingly driven by artificial intelligence.

At FSRI, we have encountered: AI-generated content that amplifies self-harm, eating disorders, and other dangerous behaviors; deepfakes and synthetic media used to bully, exploit, or humiliate young people at scale; and algorithm-driven systems that reinforce isolation, fear, and emotional distress rather than connection and well-being.

Importantly, these harms are not distributed equally. Youth who have experienced trauma, are involved in the child welfare system, or live with behavioral health challenges or developmental differences are especially vulnerable. For these young people, algorithmic amplification and unmoderated content can exacerbate existing struggles, deepen isolation, and create new forms of digital trauma.



Families and providers need clear guardrails, shared responsibility, and thoughtful public policy that recognizes how rapidly this landscape is evolving. That is why H7953 matters. This bill represents a balanced and proactive approach, one that respects parental involvement while placing reasonable expectations on social media platforms to operate with transparency, accountability, and care. Most importantly, it places the protection of children at the center of our response.

Because the question before us is not whether artificial intelligence and social media will shape our future. They already are. The real question is whether we will shape that future in a way that protects the mental health, safety, and dignity of Rhode Island's children and families.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to support H7953. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Margaret Holland McDuff', written in a cursive style.

Margaret Holland McDuff
CEO