



THE SHASM ACT:

Stop Harms from Addictive Social Media

Social Media's Harm to Children

Addictive Design: A brain exposed frequently to social media closely resembles a brain hooked on the most highly addictive drugs.

Damage to Mental Health: Social media use is *causing* declines in mental health and increases in self-harm and suicidality.

Dangerous Content: Social media algorithms quickly pull kids down dangerous rabbit holes of drug-related or sexual content.

Bad Actors: Every day, as many as 100,000 children receive sexual harassment on social media platforms, including sextortion and obscene images.

Current Social Media Laws Are Falling Short

- **They aren't surviving court challenge!** So far, 100% of state laws intended to keep children off of addictive social media have been enjoined by courts as violating First Amendment rights. So whatever you think of these laws, they aren't getting the job done.
- **They enable "one and done" evasion.** Minors who find a way to fake age verification once will have an account for good, with no further obligation or risk to the social media company.
- **They raise legitimate free speech concerns.** "Gatekeeper" age verification requires every user to provide identification or biometric information in order to create a social media account. But the ability to share your thoughts or views anonymously has been an important American right since colonial times. It may be even more important in an age of government and corporate surveillance and "cancellation" of those who express conservative or religious opinions.
- **They threaten to silence new or alternative channels of communication.** Laws that impose costly or complex burdens even on small or new social media platforms may damage innovation and the creation of alternative channels for avoiding corporate cancellation and censorship.

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Yes They Can! Social media platforms already perform age estimation:



Facebook applies

“sophisticated [A.I.] framework[s]” to “existing data” to identify those who misidentify their age,” based on a user’s “interactions with other profiles and content.”



Instagram invites advertisers to specify the age of users who will see their ads within single-year increments.



TikTok “infer[s] attributes

[including age] based on information we have about a user, including their activity on TikTok.”



YouTube uses

“machine learning to identify” individuals who give inaccurate age information, based on the content that a user chooses to watch.

SHASM: THREADING THE NEEDLE TO PROTECT KIDS

The SHASM Act (pronounced “Shazam”) builds on existing legal precedent to ensure that the law both protects kids and can survive legal challenges:

1. **Preserve anonymity through “age estimation” instead of age verification.** SHASM requires major social media platforms to deploy the same A.I. technologies they use to analyze, addict and “monetize” kids, to instead identify and remove kids’ accounts. Most users will never have to provide ID or biometric information.
2. **Remain 100% “content neutral.”** Laws that restrict specific types of content typically face tough hurdles under First Amendment legal precedents. SHASM is 100% content neutral, focusing on restricting the addictive technological aspects of social media that are harmful to the neurological, social, and educational development of children.
3. **No “one and done” evasion.** SHASM requires platforms to regularly refine or correct their age estimate for users. Even if a child is incorrectly identified as an adult after her first few hours of activity, she will be correctly identified after a few more hours of time on the platform.
4. **Protects a child’s on-line personal information.** SHASM designates a child’s on-line behaviors and communications as “personal information” which corporations may not exploit for profit.
5. **Make kids less attractive to SMPs.** SHASM destroys social media’s financial incentives to addict kids by prohibiting targeted commercial advertising to kids’ accounts and creating substantial and long-term liability risk for giving accounts to kids in violation of the law.
6. **Respect parental rights.** SHASM respects parents who give permission for their child to have a social media account through the use of “verifiable parental consent,” as defined in federal law.
7. **Doesn’t squash innovation.** 95% of kids’ time on social media is spent on the largest platforms. SHASM focuses its requirements on large social media platforms with annual revenues in excess of \$1 billion. If a new platform becomes popular and it grows, it too will have to comply.