

App Store Accountability Act

APP STORES ARE THE BROKERS OF DIGITAL HARM AND EXPLOITATION

App stores are the digital gatekeepers of children's online lives, but they systematically harm them by treating them as adults and positioning them to consent to exploitative contracts with large corporations. App stores face little accountability for misleading age ratings, and they routinely make critical details, such as app content descriptors, hard to access. This makes informed consent effectively impossible.

Unlike nearly every other industry that markets products to children and teens, app stores have been practically exempt from child safety regulations. This creates dangerous loopholes in protections for minors, leaving them vulnerable to harm, abuse, and exploitation.

The App Store Accountability Act (ASAA) addresses several critical gaps in app store protections for children.

1. Parental Consent for Users Under 18

If individuals must be 18 to independently enter into binding contracts, the same standard should apply to the terms of service of app stores. By facilitating these agreements, app stores broker minors into contracts that they cannot legally consent to, exposing them to financial, personal safety, and legal risks. The ASAA closes this loophole by requiring app stores to obtain verifiable parental consent before minors can download apps or make in-app purchases.

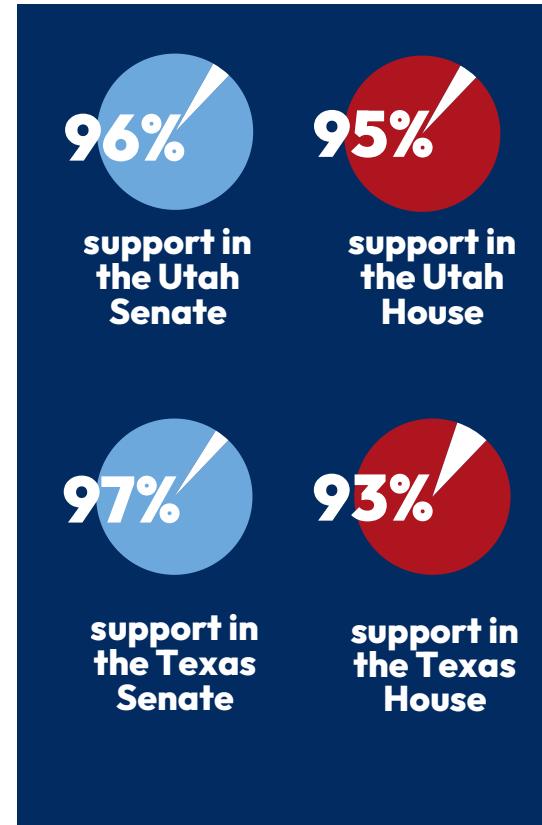
2. App Store “Truth in Advertising”

App age ratings are often misleading, inconsistent, and unaccountable. The ASAA requires clear, accurate app descriptions and allows parents to take legal action if an app store or developer knowingly misrepresents the risks, ensuring that they are held responsible for deceptive ratings.

3. App Store Age Verification

App stores allow developers to unknowingly enter contracts with minors, creating legal, ethical, and safety risks, exposing children to unenforceable agreements and predatory situations. The App Store Accountability Act fixes this by requiring age verification and anonymized age categories for developers, ensuring compliance with privacy laws and stronger child protections.

Because app stores already collect birthdates, most adults link a credit card, and parents verify their children's ages, implementing age verification is both simple and technically feasible.



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