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October 4, 2021

United States Senate
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety, and
Data Security
Russell Senate Office Building, 254
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: "Protecting Kids Online: Facebook, Instagram, and Mental
Health Harms"

Dear Chairman Blumenthal and Ranking Member Blackburn:

The undersigned state Attorneys General write to express our strong support for the hearings being conducted by the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation's Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety, and Data Security regarding "Protecting Kids Online: Facebook, Instagram, and Mental Health Harms." As enforcers of our jurisdictions' consumer protection laws, we find it deeply troubling that Facebook and other social media platforms seek to increase user engagement by conscripting our nation's youth despite known harms to children and adolescents.

We are incensed by recent reports in the Wall Street Journal ("WSJ") and other media outlets, which, if accurate, detail how Facebook has designed its algorithms to attract greater youth engagement. Perhaps more disturbing is the fact that Facebook is doing all of this knowing its own internal studies show the resulting harm – increased mental distress, bullying, contemplation of suicide, and other self-harm – on a significant number of children, with a particularly negative impact on young girls. And Facebook is not alone. WSJ also described how TikTok allows its algorithms to direct young users to pornographic websites depicting violence against women. We are already on

record calling for Facebook to stop (not suspend) its plans to establish an Instagram platform for young children. The WSJ reports only substantiate that position and frankly, call for further efforts.

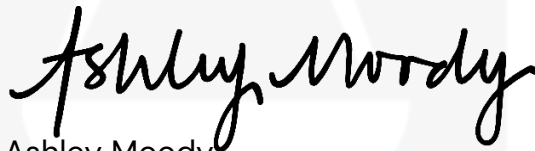
Facebook and other social media platforms understand that their business models necessitate increasing the amount of time that kids engage with their platforms to maximize monetization. More engagement by the user equals more data to leverage for advertising, which equals greater profit. This prompts social media companies to design their algorithms to psychologically manipulate young users into a state of addiction to their cell phone screens. Parents and children seeking a sense of balance and well-being are forced to combat these sophisticated methods seemingly alone. This is simply not a fair fight. When our young people's health becomes mere collateral damage of greater profits for social media companies, it is time for the government to intervene. These hearings are an important start.

We are confident that your hearings will uncover critical information about the business practices that social media companies are using to gain the attention of more young people on their platforms. The matter is urgent. Both the current and future well-being of our nation's youth is at stake. We cannot cede such an important interest to the bottom line of social media companies.

Sincerely,



Rob Bonta
California Attorney General



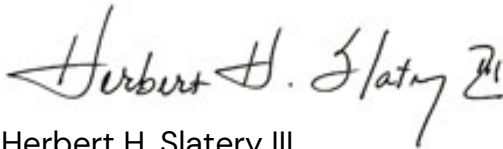
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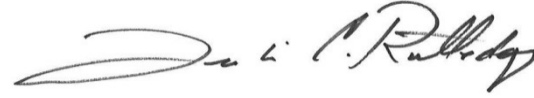
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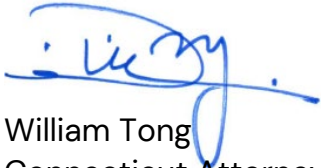
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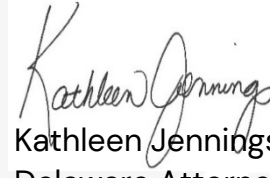
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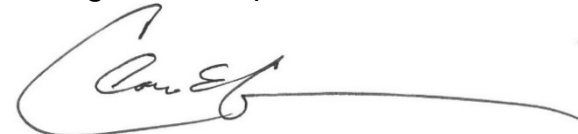
Karl A. Racine
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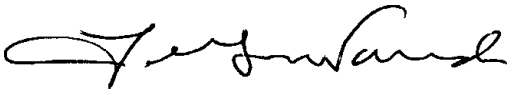
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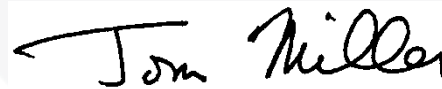
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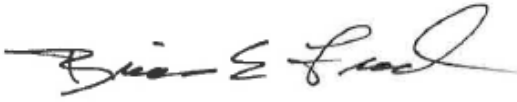
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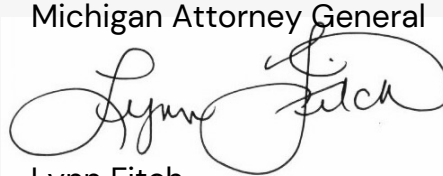
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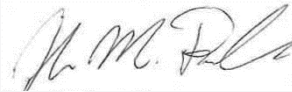
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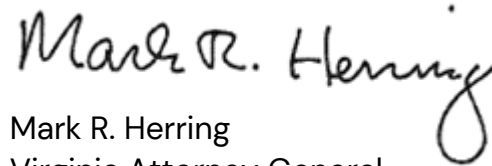
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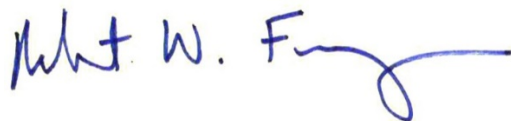
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