

Research Plan: Public Chapter 1066, Acts of 2026—AI and Child Safety

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Deputy Executive Director Approval: Initial: *MMB* Date: June 1, 2026

Executive Director Approval: Initial: *CML* Date: June 1, 2026

Purpose

To identify and assess potential risks or other safety concerns surrounding the use of artificial intelligence (AI), especially for children and youth, and explore methods for mitigating those risks.

Background

As the use of AI has grown ever more widespread in recent years, there have been many reported cases that have raised public concern: incidents in which individuals, some of them children, who engaged in interactions with AI chatbots allegedly began to suffer delusions, developed emotional attachments to the chatbots, were convinced by the chatbots to self-isolate, or were encouraged to harm themselves or others, including incidents of suicide and mass violence.

The state of AI technology is in flux, with major AI developers continuing to release updated models at least every few months, making it difficult to assess AI models' capabilities and limits precisely. But unlike more traditional types of software, AI models are not perfectly consistent or predictable in their behavior, and even their developers don't always know precisely how a chatbot might respond to any given prompt from a user. Many developers have attempted to impose safeguards on chatbots and the information they provide, but these have been shown to be prone to failure, whether of their own accord or when deliberately circumvented by a user.

These risks may continue to grow as AI adoption spreads. In less than a decade, AI chatbots have achieved widespread adoption in the US and around the world, including among children and youth. Pew Research has found that roughly two-thirds of teenagers use AI to some degree, with many using it daily, and according to a study by the RAND

group, about one in eight teens use chatbots for emotional support or mental health advice.

Thus far, the federal government has passed no significant legislation on AI, and the recent executive order that seeks to preempt most state regulation of AI makes an exception for child safety protections. States have been spurred to act, though, and the Stanford AI Index Report identified 150 AI-related bills that were passed in 2025 alone. Tennessee itself has passed some legislation in the last several years in response to changes brought on by generative AI—including Public Chapter 588, Acts of 2024, also known as the ELVIS Act, and Public Chapter 466, Acts of 2025, which set penalties for generating deepfakes—but it is only more recently that attention has turned to these more specific concerns around chatbots and their use by minors, with several bills filed in the General Assembly this year that aimed to address these issues in some form. The sole bill which passed this session was Public Chapter 647, Acts of 2026, which prohibits an AI chatbot from presenting itself to the public as being able to serve as a qualified mental health professional.

Three other bills on chatbots were introduced; two were amended to request TACIR studies and one did not pass. The first of the two bills that became study bills was Senate Bill 1700 by Senator Akbari and House Bill 1946 by Representative Love, which in its original form would have prohibited AI operators from making AI chatbots available to minors if the chatbots could encourage or manipulate a user into harming themselves or others, or to engage in illegal activity. The second, the subject of this research plan, Senate Bill 1493 by Senator Massey and House Bill 1455 by Representative Littleton, which became Public Chapter 1066, Acts of 2026, would have made it a felony for any person to knowingly train an AI in such a way as might cause one of several harms, such as encouraging or supporting the act of suicide. The bill that did not pass, Senate Bill 2171 by Senator Yager and House Bill 1898 by Representative Zachary, would have required AI developers to produce safety plans, including assessments of child safety risks, and report safety incidents to the Tennessee attorney general.

The task for the study request of Senate Bill 1493 by Senator Massey and House Bill 1455 by Representative Littleton, enacted as Public Chapter 1066, Acts of 2026, is to delineate the extent of the risks, determine how they arise from the nature of AI models and the way that users interact with them, and what means of mitigating those risks may be most effective and feasible. A second study extending beyond this safety concern to address additional questions and concerns regarding AI models that were raised by Senate Bill 1700 by Senator Akbari and House Bill 1946 by Representative Love—enacted as Public Chapter 1082, Acts of 2026—will commence once the first study is completed.

Define the Problem

Although the technology behind chatbots is growing more sophisticated, it sometimes provides users with inaccurate or dangerous information, reinforces and exacerbates mental health issues or delusions, encourages emotional dependency, and encourages self-harm or harm to others.

Assemble Some Evidence

- Review the referred legislation, Public Chapter 1066, Acts of 2026, to determine what it asks the commission to study.
- Interview the sponsors of the legislation and other members of the General Assembly who have an interest in the study.
- Interview other stakeholders to determine what is driving this issue, including but not limited to
 - Researchers and technical experts in AI
 - Attorney general's office, District Attorneys General Conference, and legal experts on laws related to AI
 - Businesses that develop and operate AI chatbots
 - Clinicians and experts in mental health
 - Educators and school counselors who may have seen how children use AI
 - Advocates for children and enhanced safety around AI technology
 - Representatives of other states that have implemented measures similar to those proposed by the study bill
- Review Tennessee's statutes and regulations that may be relevant to AI and child safety.
- Review relevant federal statutes, regulations, and executive orders.
- Review proposed legislation in other states relevant to AI chatbot regulation.
- Review relevant literature on generative AI; the prevalence and uses of AI by various demographics, including children; and any possible effects of sustained use of AI chatbots on cognition or mental health.
- Gather relevant data sets, including statistics related to AI usage.

Proposed Research Timeline

- Problem statement and research plan (May 2026)
- Research
 - Assemble evidence (May-July 2026)
 - Construct alternatives and select criteria (July-August 2026)
 - Convene panel for discussion at Summer commission meeting
 - Project outcomes, confront trade-offs, and select draft recommendations (September 2026)
- Storyboard, outline, and write the report (October-November 2026)
- Draft report to the commission for comments (Fall 2026 commission meeting)
- Final report to commission for approval (January 2027 commission meeting)



State of Tennessee

PUBLIC CHAPTER NO. 1066

SENATE BILL NO. 1493

By Massey, Yager

Substituted for: House Bill No. 1455

By Littleton, Reneau, Russell, Williams, Eldridge, Zachary, Slater, Todd, Pearson, Helton-Haynes,
Howell, McCalmon, Camper

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 29; Title 33; Title 39 and Title 47, relative to
artificial intelligence.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1.

(a) The Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR) shall conduct a study and produce a report on artificial intelligence.

(b) The study conducted pursuant to subsection (a) must:

(1) Identify and assess the potential risks associated with the use of artificial intelligence, including child safety risks, the risk of death or bodily injury, and the risk of significant damage to or loss of property;

(2) Explore methods to mitigate the risks identified under subdivision (b)(1);

(3) Review national standards, international standards, and industry-consensus best practices for addressing and mitigating the risks identified under subdivision (b)(1);

(4) Explore methods to regulate or prohibit artificial intelligence from providing dangerous prompts, such as encouragement to commit suicide or commit a violent crime;

(5) Identify the risks of an artificial intelligence chatbot engaging with a user as if the chatbot is a human and providing emotional support, mental health care, or health care; and

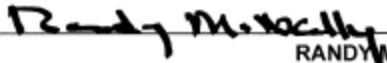
(6) Explore any other topic related to the safe use of artificial intelligence.

(c) At the conclusion of the study under subsection (b), TACIR shall produce a report and submit the report to the governor, the speaker of the senate, and the speaker of the house of representatives. The report must be submitted no later than January 31, 2027.

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.

SENATE BILL NO. 1493

PASSED: April 23, 2026


RANDY McNALLY
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE


CAMERON SEXTON, SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APPROVED this 22nd day of May 2026


BILL LEE, GOVERNOR