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MEMORANDUM

TO: Commission Members

FROM: Cliff Lippard
Executive Director

DATE: 16 September 2026

SUBJECT: Public Chapter 1066, Acts of 2026 (AI and Child Safety)—Panels

In just four years, artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots have risen from novelty to mass adoption, and today, the speed with which AI use has spread and continues to evolve has led to questions about how to balance its potential benefits and risks, particularly for children. Surveys show that sizable majorities of teenagers have used chatbots to at least some extent, and roughly one in eight teenagers now report using chatbots for emotional support or mental health advice. Public Chapter 1066, Acts of 2026, directs the commission to (1) identify and assess the potential risks associated with the use of AI and (2) explore ways in which those risks might be mitigated, including a review of standards and best practices, as well as ways to regulate or prohibit AI models from giving dangerous outputs.

Stakeholders have cited a host of risks with AI for young people, including but not limited to the following:

- chatbots exacerbating mental health issues from delusions to depression and even encouraging users to self-harm and suicide
- chatbots providing inaccurate and possibly even dangerous information, such as incorrect medical advice or even details on building a bomb
- the use of AI for child sexual abuse and exploitation
- children “offloading” their thinking to AI and failing to develop academic or social skills

Some of these risks, such as child exploitation, arise from the abuse of AI technology by those with criminal intentions. Others, however, emerge out of the interplay of human users’ psychological and cognitive vulnerabilities with something that isn’t human but can convincingly appear to be.

Today, you will hear from two panels focused on AI and mitigating child safety risks. The first panel includes the following experts:

- Dr. Jesse Spencer-Smith, Director and Chief Data Scientist, Data Science Institute, Vanderbilt University
- Dr. Elsa Friis, VP of Product and Clinical, Alongside (TimelyCare)
- Richard Littlehale, Assistant Director for Technology and Innovation, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation
- General Jonathan Skrmetti, Attorney General, State of Tennessee

For the second panel, you will hear from representatives for companies in the AI industry:

- Caitlin Niedermeyer, Youth Safety Policy Lead, Global Affairs, OpenAI
- Virginia Ross, Amazon US Public Policy, Amazon
- Jared Bomberg, Privacy, Safety, and Security, Google
- Representative for SpaceX

Thus far, the federal government has passed the TAKE IT DOWN Act, which criminalizes the non-consensual publication of intimate images, including AI-generated deepfakes, but has otherwise passed no legislation regulating 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, 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 the 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 that 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. Of the two bills sent to the commission for study, Senate Bill 1493 by Senator Massey and House Bill 1455 by Representative Littleton—which became Public Chapter 1066, Acts of 2026—as originally filed, 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 second study bill, Senate Bill 1700 by Senator Akbari and House Bill 1946 by Representative Love, 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 engage in illegal activity. It was amended and enacted as Public Chapter 1082, Acts of 2026, which directs the commission to study questions and concerns related to AI in addition to child safety—that study will commence once the first study is complete. The third bill from this session, which also 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.