



SAMPLE CHILD IMPACT STATEMENTS

EXAMPLE ONE: AGE RESTRICTIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN GEORGIA

Note for Readers: Social media includes platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook, and Twitter. Age restrictions typically apply to having your own account to post, comment, or share content. This impact statement was written by the North Gwinnett High School UNICEF Club.

Overview

1. **Name of the policy or program:** Social Media and Internet Safety Legislation
2. **Source of the policy or program (level of government, such as city council, county commission, school board, state legislature, etc.):** Georgia State Senate
3. **Reference number, if applicable (e.g., legislative bill number, resolution number, etc.):** [Senate Bill 165](#)
4. **Provide one or two sentences describing the policy or program.** Proposed by Sen. Nikki Merritt, this legislation would ban children younger than 14 from using social media platforms. While intended to protect young users from harmful online content, some argue that outright bans might limit opportunities for social connection and support, which are vital for mental well-being.

Child Impact Statement Questions

1. **How does the policy or program impact (e.g., hurt or help) children and youth, especially those who need it most?**

The proposed legislation by Sen. Nikki Merritt to ban children under 14 from accessing social media platforms seeks to protect young users from harmful online content such as cyberbullying, exploitation, and age-inappropriate material. For children, especially those with limited parental supervision or access to digital literacy education, this legislation may reduce exposure to psychological risks that can arise from early, unregulated social media use.



However, the policy may also unintentionally harm children who rely on social media as a primary outlet for peer support, identity exploration, or access to mental health communities—especially youth from marginalized backgrounds, including LGBTQ+ youth, children in foster care, or those experiencing social isolation. For these children, social media can serve as a crucial lifeline that fosters connection, self-expression, and community when in-person support systems are lacking.

This legislation could also deepen digital inequities. Children with the resources to bypass age restrictions through parental assistance or technological workarounds may continue to access platforms, while others are excluded entirely, exacerbating disparities in digital engagement and voice.

To minimize harm and uphold children's rights to both safety and meaningful connection, the legislation should be coupled with accessible mental health resources, digital literacy education, and alternative safe online spaces designed for younger users.

2. Does it affect any groups of young people disproportionately (e.g., children and youth of color, LGBTQ+ youth, children with disabilities, etc.)? How?

Social media often provides a vital safe space for LGBTQ+ youth to explore their identities and find affirmation. A [study from GLSEN](#) found that 62% of LGBTQ+ youth reported using online platforms to connect with others who share their identity, and the [Trevor Project](#) has found that the internet is the leading affirming space for LGBTQ young people, with many citing this as essential to their mental health. Removing access may lead to increased isolation, especially in unsupportive home or school environments. However, LGBTQ+ youth are also more likely to be targets of online harassment. A ban could reduce exposure to cyberbullying and hate speech, especially for younger users who may lack the tools to cope with such content.

Social media is a platform where many Black, Latine, Indigenous, and Asian American youth engage in cultural expression, organize activism, and build solidarity. According to a [2023 article in Fortune](#), youth of color are among the most active in using digital spaces to promote social justice movements. A ban could limit these opportunities for voice and visibility. At the same time, youth of color often experience racial discrimination online. Limiting early access to such platforms could delay exposure to harmful stereotyping or digital racism, which has been linked to negative mental health outcomes.



For children in rural or under-resourced communities, social media can be one of the few ways to access peers, educational content, and mental health resources. A [recent study](#) found that rural youth use social media more often to combat isolation, as their real-life social networks tend to be smaller and more dispersed. On the other hand, delaying exposure to addictive algorithms and misinformation common on major platforms could give these youth more time to develop critical digital literacy skills before engaging with broader online communities.

3. How does it affect parents'/caregivers' ability to support their children?

SB 165 aims to protect children under 14 by prohibiting their access to social media platforms. While this could shield young users from harmful content, it may also limit parents' ability to guide their children's online experiences.

- A [Pew Research Center study](#) found that 95% of teens aged 13 to 17 use social media, with over a third using it "almost constantly."
- Mental health professionals have noted that excessive social media use can lead to issues like addiction and self-comparison among youth.
- Conversely, social media can provide essential support networks, especially for marginalized youth, such as LGBTQ+ individuals, who may rely on online communities for connection and support.

While the bill's intent is to protect mental health, it may inadvertently hinder parents' ability to support their children in developing healthy online habits and accessing supportive communities.

4. Were potentially impacted youth consulted in its development?

There is no public record indicating that youth were consulted during the development of SB 165. The bill was introduced by state legislators without documented input from students or youth advocacy organizations. Future policy development should include direct engagement with youth to understand their perspectives and needs regarding social media use

5. If the policy or program requires money to implement, is it sufficiently funded? Where is the money coming from?

SB 165 does not specify funding sources for its implementation. The bill imposes fines on social media companies for non-compliance but does not detail how these funds will be allocated or whether they will support enforcement or educational initiatives. The absence of



defined funding mechanisms raises concerns about the feasibility and sustainability of the bill's enforcement and educational components.

6. As the policy or program is put into action, what system is in place to make sure it meets its stated goals as they relate to all children and youth?

The bill mandates that social media companies use "commercially reasonable efforts" to verify users' ages and imposes fines for violations. However, it lacks a detailed framework for monitoring compliance or assessing the policy's effectiveness in improving youth mental health. Establish a monitoring body to evaluate the policy's impact on youth mental health and online safety, ensuring that it meets its intended goals.

7. What changes can be made to improve outcomes for children and youth and avoid negative impacts on them?

Recommendations:

- Involve youth in the policymaking process to ensure their needs and perspectives are considered.
- Implement comprehensive digital literacy programs in schools to teach safe and responsible social media use.
- Provide resources and training for parents to help them guide their children's online activities effectively.
- Ensure that age verification processes protect users' privacy and data security.
- Allocate funds from collected fines to support mental health services for youth affected by social media-related issues.

Conclusion: By incorporating these changes, SB 165 can better balance the protection of youth from online harms with the preservation of beneficial aspects of social media, such as community building and access to information.

Date Completed: 05/09/2025

Names and affiliations of individuals who completed the statement: North Gwinnett High School UNICEF Club



EXAMPLE TWO: BROADBAND ACCESS IN TEXAS

Note for Readers: Broadband is reliable, high-speed internet that is always on and lets you quickly access videos, music, websites, and other online content all at the same time. This impact statement was developed as a prototype by Kids Impact. The policy described is a real proposal, but young people were not involved in developing this example.

Overview

1. **Name of the policy or program:** Texas Broadband Development Office
2. **Source of the policy or program (level of government, such as city council, county commission, school board, state legislature, etc.):** Texas State Legislature
3. **Reference number, if applicable (e.g., legislative bill number, resolution number, etc.):** [SB 506](#) (Texas - 2021 legislative session)
4. **Provide one or two sentences describing the policy or program.** This legislation establishes a broadband development office in Texas state government. The office is responsible for creating a broadband development map, a state broadband plan, a broadband grant program to expand access to and adoption of broadband, and an associated broadband development account. It also adds a member of the broadband development office to the Governor's Broadband Development Council and expands the responsibilities of the Council.

Child Impact Statement Questions

1. **How does the policy or program impact (e.g., hurt or help) children and youth, especially those who need it most?**

This proposal has the potential to significantly improve Texas children's access to broadband. Texas has the [largest population](#) in the nation of K-12 students without an adequate internet connection. [Fifty-eight percent of Texas K-12 students](#) lack affordable broadband.

2. **Does it affect any groups of young people disproportionately (e.g., children and youth of color, LGBTQ+ youth, children with disabilities, etc.)? How?**



Yes, especially children and youth of color, children and youth in low-income families, and children and youth living in rural areas. If targeted to where the need is greatest, this proposal could significantly improve digital equity for children and youth of color in Texas, especially given that the majority of children in Texas are children of color (e.g., [49% of children in Texas are Hispanic, and 12% are Black](#)). Latinx students are less likely than White students to have access to both broadband and a computer ([59% vs. 78%](#)), and Black students also have less access to broadband and a computer than White students at [63%](#). Only [50%](#) of children living in rural households have access to broadband and a computer, compared to [70%](#) of children living in metropolitan areas.

[Many low-income households](#) do not have the financial means to purchase high-speed internet services even when they are available. [Twenty-one percent](#) of children in Texas live in poverty, and children in Texas living below the poverty line are much less likely than their more affluent peers to have access to both affordable broadband and computers ([43% vs. 74%](#)). This proposal has the potential to benefit low-income families if the grant program created by this proposed legislation subsidizes the cost of broadband in geographic areas where these families live, learn, and work.

3. How does it affect parents'/caregivers' ability to support their children?

If the program ensures access to high-speed internet in homes as well as at schools, libraries, and other community sites, parents will be able to engage in essential online activities to support their children's education, health, and well-being. Examples include the ability to access health care services via telehealth, search and apply for jobs online, communicate with their children's schools online, connect to economic benefits and social services online, and take classes online.

4. Were potentially impacted youth consulted in its development?

No.

5. If the policy or program requires money to implement, is it sufficiently funded? Where is the money coming from?

The legislation creates an account to fund the program's activities, but it is unclear where the funding will come from. However, funding for the program could be included in the state budget or through other means.



6. As the policy or program is put into action, what system is in place to make sure it meets its stated goals as they relate to all children and youth?

The program is governed by the Governor’s Broadband Development Council. However, youth are not represented on the Council.

7. What changes can be made to improve outcomes for children and youth and avoid negative impacts on them?

Unless there is a specific focus on children and the institutions that shape their lives, the benefits of this proposal could bypass large numbers of Texans who especially need them—including children of color, rural children, and low-income children. To address this potential gap, language could be added to the legislation to:

- Ensure that youth—particularly youth of color, rural youth, and low-income youth—have a voice in decisions about broadband deployment in Texas by creating two seats for youth on the Governor’s Broadband Development Council
- Identify and highlight the unique broadband needs of Texas children—including rural children, low-income children, and children of color—through broadband mapping and other strategies.
- Implement, monitor, and publicly report on strategies and progress to address those needs
- Ensure the program is adequately funded.
- Prioritize grants and other financial incentives to deploy broadband into neighborhoods with significant percentages of families of color, low-income families, rural families, and other marginalized groups.
- Support complementary policies that guarantee all Texas children, youth, and families have access to affordable computing devices.

Date Completed: N/A

Names and affiliations of individuals who completed the statement: N/A