



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL

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**October 15th, 2026. Testimony on Protecting Youth from Social Media Harm
for The Senate Majority Policy Committee
Pottsgrove Middle School,
Pottstown, PA**

Good morning, Chairman Argall and members of the committee. Thank you, Senator Pennycuick, for hosting this hearing in your district and the opportunity to appear before you today.

Public safety is at the center of the work of the Office of Attorney General, and protecting children remains one of our highest priorities. During my time as Attorney General, we have seen significant changes in the threats facing Pennsylvanians families, particularly as technology has changed the way children communicate, learn and interact with one another.

The threats facing children today are not limited to what happens in their homes, schools or communities. Increasingly, they extend into the digital spaces where children spend significant amounts of time.

What concerns me most is how quickly that technology is changing the nature of those threats. We are seeing technology used to create, manipulate and distribute abusive material, while children are also increasingly exposed to online content and technologies that can affect their safety and well-being.

Our response has to evolve with those threats. That means enforcement when laws are violated, legislation where new tools are needed, partnerships with local law enforcement and schools, and resources that allow children and families to seek help before a situation becomes a crisis.

Today, I want to discuss several areas of that work: protecting children from harmful online content and technology, the partnerships between the Office of Attorney General and local law enforcement in combating child exploitation, and the resources available to Pennsylvania students, schools and families.



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ONLINE SAFETY, TECHNOLOGY AND OUR COMMUNITIES

This year, my office has taken significant action to address the risks children face online. We have filed lawsuits against Tik Tok¹ and Snapchat² concerning allegations that the companies failed to accurately represent their platforms to the app stores. This misrepresentation robs parents of the information they deserve to make sound decisions for what apps their children have access to.

The lawsuits allege that both companies misrepresented the prevalence of adult-oriented material and other harmful content on their platforms in connection with their age ratings in app stores. This includes content involving sexual material and nudity, profanity and drug use. The result of that misrepresentation is a lower age rating than they would have likely received had they been truthful. Why do they do this? In order to be able to attract as many users as possible which increases their users.

Then, once they have you on the app, we also allege that these platforms intentionally design their platforms to be addictive to children.

These cases are part of a broader effort by my office to hold technology companies accountable when products are developed or marketed to children without adequate consideration of their potential harms.

META

My office also recently reached a significant agreement with Meta on a similar lawsuit. While much focus recently has centered on the funding, it is the injunctive relief that excites me most. Here is a list of some of that the injunctive relief that we secured:

- Hard cap daily time limits and “Productive Pauses” for children: for its two platforms, Instagram and Facebook, a combined two-hour daily time limit with mandatory pauses after 15 minutes of continuous use and again at 60 and 90 minutes to interrupt endless scrolling. These limits remain in effect for five years.

¹ [Attorney General Sunday Announces Lawsuit Against TikTok for Misrepresentations that Permit Age-13+ Rating in App Stores](#)

² [Attorney General Sunday Announces Lawsuit Against Snapchat for Failures to Protect Children from Compulsive Use](#)



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If Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube adopt comparable terms, the daily limit on each platform will drop to 60 minutes for 10 years.

- “Nighttime blocks” restricting children’s access from 12:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.
- Limited school-time access for children, eliminating push notifications on weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. during the school year.
- Robust age assurance measures to more effectively verify the age of young users.
- Safer, age-appropriate content controls, including stronger safeguards against bullying, content promoting eating disorders, and content related to suicide and self-harm.
- Stronger, more user-friendly parental controls.
- Limits on social comparison features, including beauty filters and visible “like” counts, which have been linked to poor mental health outcomes in kids and teens.
- Both the implementation and efficacy of the features will be regularly assessed by an independent auditor and the settling states.

Under the agreement, Pennsylvania is also to receive \$516 million over a period of years, with up to \$729 million in total if industry wide adoption of the injunctive relief that was won are adopted by other platforms. The lawsuits against TikTok and Snapchat, announced before the META deal, are now part of those efforts.

Members of my office were there when the META trial began in California earlier this summer. It was expected to be a month’s long process after which appeals would likely follow. The agreement with META developed very rapidly. Since this was announced, we began a deliberative process internally to understand what costs went into this result and will likely be needed to achieve similar results in other suits.

My office is working diligently to determine how these funds can best be used to protect Pennsylvania children and families, and we expect to lay out our proposal soon. I think it’s critical for Pennsylvania to get this right.



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What I will say about our goal is that the use of this funding needs to build capacity to support the well-being of our young people who have already been harmed by technology, prevent future harm and build resilience for the generation coming of age now and ensure that we have the tools to keep up with the growing threats we are talking about today.

It is my hope to build consensus among all of our governmental stakeholders in the legislature and in the executive branch, be transparent to the people of Pennsylvania and be impactful to the needs of those most at risk from social media.

But protecting children requires us to look beyond the technology itself. The threats facing children do not exist in isolation, and our law enforcement response cannot either.

Whether the threat comes through a phone, a social media platform or a gaming platform, effective collaboration among law enforcement agencies is essential. If our communities aren't safe, nothing else matters.

My office has issued demand letters to AI companies³ concerning harmful chatbot interactions and is continuing to examine the risks rapidly evolving AI technology can pose to children.

This is an area where the law has to keep pace with technology. The tools available to children and those who seek to exploit them are changing quickly, and we have to make sure law enforcement has the authority and resources necessary to respond. I appreciate the continued partnership of members of this committee, including Sen. Pennycuik, as we continue to ensure Pennsylvania's laws keep pace with these emerging technologies.

PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE OAG AND LOCAL AND COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Office of Attorney General's Child Predator Section works closely with local and county law enforcement agencies across Pennsylvania.

³ [AG Sunday Leads Coalition of 42 Attorneys General in Letter to A.I. Software Companies Demanding Safeguards to Protect Vulnerable Residents from Harmful Interactions with Bots](#)



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These partnerships allow agencies to draw on specialized investigative, technological and prosecutorial resources when needed.

This partnership is particularly important because not every local department has access to specialized digital forensic capabilities, investigators who regularly handle these cases or the resources necessary to investigate increasingly complex online crimes.

The Office of Attorney General can provide those resources while working alongside the local agency that knows the community and the circumstances of the case.

LEGISLATIVE PARTNERSHIP

I also want to recognize Sen. Pennycuick's leadership on these issues. Her support, along with that of members of this committee and the General Assembly, has helped strengthen the laws and resources available to protect children.

[Act 125 of 2024](#), enacted from Senate Bill 1213, provided important tools for law enforcement addressing child sexual abuse and child sexual abuse material, including material created or altered through artificial intelligence. Those tools were relevant to charges earlier this year involving juveniles from Lancaster County Day School in a case involving their classmates.

The General Assembly has continued to address emerging threats. Last week, the Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 1368](#), also sponsored by Sen. Pennycuick, addressing nudification applications. I just have to say that Sen. Pennycuick has been at the forefront of this issue. You have used your chairmanship of the Senate Communications and Technology Committee to focus on these issues and speaking on behalf of law enforcement, I just want to thank you for your leadership. Senator Pennycuick, your leadership has protected children, put predators in jail and made our communities safer.

WORK OF THE OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL

Since January, the Office of Attorney General's Child Predator Section has:

- Made 56 arrests involving child sexual abuse material offenses;
- Opened 239 cases;



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- Investigated possession, dissemination and manufacturing offenses involving both traditional and AI-generated or altered CSAM;
- Investigated 12 cases involving AI-generated or morphed CSAM; and
- Made 8 arrests involving repeat offenders.

The Child Predator Section also provides ongoing assistance to local law enforcement, including investigations, search-warrant execution, prosecution and computer forensics.

The section's electronic-detection K-9 Emery, has assisted outside agencies on 10 occasions this year, in addition to being utilized in our own child predator cases.

This section also regularly conducts and assists with online chat operations in partnership with local law enforcement agencies.

These cases demonstrate why collaboration matters. A local department may identify a threat or begin an investigation, and the Office of Attorney General can bring additional specialized resources to help take that investigation to the next level. Our goal is straightforward: identify those who are exploiting children, build cases that can withstand prosecution and make sure victims are protected.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO CHILDREN REGARDING MENTAL HEALTH AND ONLINE SAFETY

Protecting children does not end with investigations and prosecutions. We also have a responsibility to make sure students, parents and educators have information and resources available before a problem becomes a crisis.

Last year, my office conducted a statewide series of teenTALK discussions⁴, speaking directly with students about their experience with social media and technology.

During the 2025-26 school year, I spoke with approximately 160 students from 35 schools across Pennsylvania. These were direct conversations with students about what they are seeing, experiencing and struggling with online.

⁴ [AG Sunday Unveils teenTALK Report, Summarizing Student Discussions and Offering Action Steps to Improve Social Media Environments](#)



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Students spoke about the benefits of technology, but also about the ways social media can become consuming and contribute to stress, anxiety and unhealthy patterns of use.

Those conversations were important because they gave us a perspective that statistics alone cannot provide. The students helped identify where they are experiencing problems and where adults need to do a better job of listening and responding.

The resulting 20-page teenTALK report identifies common themes raised by students and provides recommendations for students, parents, schools, government leaders and social media companies.

Those recommendations include promoting healthy online habits, teaching digital safety, helping students identify credible information, evaluating laws protecting children online and requiring technology companies to prioritize user safety.

The Office of Attorney General has continued to build on that work by establishing the Technology and Privacy Protection Unit within the Public Public Division.

The Office of Public Engagement also provides presentations for schools and other organizations, and the Child Predator Section will begin offering trainings for schools in partnership with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

Safe2Say Something

Another important resource is [Safe2Say Something](#), the anonymous school safety and youth violence prevention program administered by the Office of Attorney General.

Safe2Say gives students, parents and educators a way to report concerns involving school safety, bullying, threats, violence and other issues – including concerns involving a student's mental health.

During the 2025-26 school year, Safe2Say received 26,240 tips statewide⁵. Bullying and cyberbullying, suicide and suicidal ideation, cutting and self-harm, and drug distribution and possession were among the top categories of reports.

Tips involving suicide or suicidal ideations increased by 1 percent, while tips involving cutting and self-harm increased by 5 percent.

⁵ [Safe2Say Something 2025-2026 Annual Report FINAL.pdf](#)



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Those numbers reinforce the importance of early intervention and continued mental health awareness. They also demonstrate why students need a safe and confidential way to tell an adult when something is wrong.

During the 2025-26 school year, Safe2Say training was provided to 1,704 schools and reached approximately 417,490 students.

CONCLUSION

The issues I have discussed today are connected.

Protecting children online requires effective laws, specialized law enforcement resources, partnerships with local agencies, and meaningful engagement with students, parents and schools.

Technology will continue to change, and the threats will continue to evolve. Our responsibility is to make sure Pennsylvania's response evolves with them.

The Office of Attorney General will continue to investigate and prosecute those who exploit children, hold technology companies accountable when appropriate, support local law enforcement and provide resources to students and families.

But government cannot do this work alone. Parents, schools, law enforcement, technology companies, community organizations and young people themselves all have a role to play.

Our responsibility is to make sure each of those groups has the tools and information necessary to do that work.

I appreciate the committee's continued attention to these issues and the work of the General Assembly to make child safety and public safety a priority.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer your questions.