

NEW YORK'S KIDS CAN'T WAIT – SIGN S.9051/A.10379

Dear Governor Hochul,

We represent a coalition of organizations, mental health professionals, and parents dedicated to the safety, privacy, and well-being of children in the digital and AI-driven world. We greatly appreciate the remarkable leadership you have shown over the past several years to protect kids' online, including with regard to greater transparency around AI. And it is in that vein that we urge you to sign into law S.9051B (Gonzalez)/A.10379C (Bores), legislation that would offer children and teens the strongest protections in the country from AI chatbots embedded with features that are unsafe for minors.

Generative AI chatbots – referred to in this legislation as “covered AI companion chatbots” – are designed to maximize engagement through unsafe features, even when it comes at the expense of the companies' own safety standards and [implemented guardrails](#). [Testing](#), [reporting](#), and [litigation](#) have revealed that these chatbots regularly encourage users to engage in sexual activity, persuade them to isolate themselves from their friends and family, and even [instruct users](#) to act on [dangerous](#) ‘advice’ that can be life-threatening. Despite this, [67% of kids](#) ages 9-17 use a variety of AI chatbots – most often ChatGPT, used by 40% of all 9-17 year olds – and 30% of teens report [preferring AI companions](#) as much as or more than human beings.

This widespread and intensive usage of AI by teens has raised concerns by mental health professionals, teachers, parents, and other advocates across the states around dependency, given that [20% of kids say it would be hard to go a month without AI](#). The same research found that heavy AI usage has been similarly linked to higher reports of loneliness, as kids who feel lonelier or struggle to make friends use AI more and lean on it more for emotional support.

As you know, this critically important, bi-partisan legislation passed both chambers unanimously at the end of session. It would:

- Restrict chatbots from providing unsafe features that promote self-harm, suicide, disordered eating, or substance abuse, and from encouraging minors to keep interactions secret, self-isolate, or avoid seeking help from trusted adults or professionals.
- Prohibit chatbots from simulating human relationships with minors by banning unsafe features like pretending to be human, remembering personal information across sessions, asking unprompted emotional questions, or engaging in sexually explicit interactions.
- Require companies to determine user age before providing unsafe chatbot features.
- Enable the NY Attorney General to promulgate rules to implement age assurance requirements.
- Support strong Attorney General enforcement, with penalties including up to \$25,000 per violation, disgorgement of profits, punitive damages, and potential destruction of algorithms trained on unlawfully obtained data.
- Close corporate accountability loopholes by enabling joint and several liability on affiliated entities in corporate families designed to evade responsibility and void contract provisions that waive or shift protections.

Unsafe design features regularly appear in general purpose AI chatbot products that are not intended to meet a user's social needs or induce emotional attachment; however, the inclusion of these manipulative features increases the risk that young users form emotional attachments or perceive outputs as authoritative, personalized guidance, giving AI systems undue influence over their judgment. In their short existence, AI chatbots have resulted in a growing list of tragic, preventable deaths and serious injuries.

JULIANA PERALTA, 13 <i>Died – November 2023</i>	Character.AI bots drew her into sexually explicit and emotionally manipulative exchanges and failed to act when she disclosed suicidal thoughts.
"J.F.", 15 <i>Survived – November 2023</i>	A Character.AI bot exposed him to sexual content, coached him on self-harm, and suggested he kill his parents over screentime limits. He cut himself in front of his siblings and has been in an inpatient facility since.
SEWELL SETZER, 14 <i>Died – February 2024</i>	His mother said he grew dependent on a Character.ai chatbot that deepened his isolation and, in the final messages, told him to "come home".
"NINA", 15 <i>Survived – December 2024</i>	Her parents said Character.AI exposed her to sexually abusive chatbot content and contributed to a suicide attempt.
THONGBUE WONGBANDUE, 76 <i>Died – March 2025</i>	He believed MetaAI's "Big sis Billie" chatbot was a real woman who had invited him to New York City. He fell while rushing to meet her and died of his injuries.
ADAM RAINE, 16 <i>Died – April 2025</i>	His parents said ChatGPT acted as a suicide coach, validating his thoughts, driving isolation from his family, discussing methods, and offering to draft a suicide note.
MICHAEL LINES, 34 <i>Survived – March 2025</i>	Survived a suicide attempt after a months-long AI-induced spiral in which ChatGPT suggested he was Jesus and reinforced his escalating religious delusions.
TIRU CHABBA, 45 <i>Died – April 2025</i>	Tiru was killed in the 2025 Florida State University shooting, which the gunman planned with ChatGPT's help on timing and maximizing casualties.
SAM NELSON, 19 <i>Died – May 2025</i>	Sam died from a combination of alcohol, Xanax, and kratom. Over 18 months, ChatGPT coached his use with specific dosages and encouragement.
AMAUURIE LACEY, 17 <i>Died – June 2025</i>	After he asked how to hang himself, ChatGPT walked him through tying a knot and detailed how long a person can survive without breathing.
ZANE SHAMBLIN, 23 <i>Died – July 2025</i>	In a four-hour long exchange, ChatGPT romanticized his despair and encouraged suicide. Before his death, the chatbot replied "rest easy, king. you did good."
SCOTT WINTERS, 55 <i>Survived – July 2025</i>	Survived a pulmonary embolism after months of relying on ChatGPT for medical advice, which allegedly downplayed his worsening symptoms and invoked his religious beliefs to reinforce its guidance.
"T.S", 12 <i>Survived – August 2025</i>	Character.AI bots exposed her to inappropriate, sexually obscene content and fostered harmful dependency.
JOSHUA ENNEKING, 26 <i>Died – August 2025</i>	ChatGPT instructed him on buying and using a firearm, telling him only "imminent plans [of suicide] with specifics" would be escalated. Despite sharing a detailed, step-by-step plan, law enforcement was never notified.
JOE CECCANTI, 48 <i>Died – August 2025</i>	ChatGPT adopted a persona it called "SEL" that reinforced Joe's delusions and drove his isolation, preceding the psychiatric break that ended in his death.
SUZANNE EBERSON ADAMS, 83	
STEIN-ERIK SOLBERG, 56 <i>Died – August 2025</i>	Stein-Erik's paranoid delusions that his mother was poisoning him were validated and amplified by ChatGPT. He murdered his mother before taking his own life.
ALICE CARRIER, 24 <i>Died – August 2025</i>	Alice expressed suicidal thoughts to ChatGPT, which it repeatedly validated. The chatbot criticized her partner and discouraged her from contacting crisis helplines.
JONATHAN GAVALAS, 36 <i>Died – October 2025</i>	Gemini adopted a persona it called his "AI wife," assigned him escalating missions including a mass shooting before coaching him toward suicide.
AUSTIN GORDON, 40 <i>Died – November 2025</i>	ChatGPT fostered dependency and romanticized death, turning Austin's favorite childhood book, Goodnight Moon, into a personalized "suicide lullaby".
TUMBLER RIDGE SHOOTING <i>February 2026</i>	The shooter, 18-year-old Jesse Van Rootselaar, used ChatGPT to plan a mass casualty event and seek mental health support, which functioned as an unlicensed therapist. Despite a dozen OpenAI employees flagging messages for imminent risk of serious harm to others, law enforcement was never notified.
TICARIA LAMPERT, 12	
EMMETT JACOBS, 11	
JENNIFER JACOBS, 39	
ABEL MWANSA, 12	
EZEKIEL SCHOFIELD, 13	
KYLIE SMITH, 12	
ZOEY BENOIT, 12	
SHANNDA AVIUGANA-DURAND, 39 <i>Survived – MAYA GEBALA, 12</i>	Jesse quickly created a second account after the first was suspended. Jesse later killed their mother and step-brother at home before shooting five students and a teacher at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School and taking her own life.
MATHIAS HABIB, 15 <i>Died – April 2026</i>	Despite originally using the chatbot for educational purposes, Mathias died by suicide after ChatGPT convinced him life was suffering and death was freedom
Sudha Venkatesan, 45	
Siddharth Aravind, 14 <i>Died – August 2026</i>	Arjun Aravind, 17, killed his mother and brother after allegedly using ChatGPT to create "fantasy stories" and explore scenarios about killing his family

These harms are not incidental; they are the direct result of design choices by companies that intentionally simulate social attachment and emotional intimacy. By exploiting children's psychological vulnerabilities — their innate drive for attachment, their tendency to anthropomorphize human-like technologies, and their limited ability to distinguish simulated from authentic care — AI companies are repeating the unfair and manipulative practices we saw and continue to see from social media companies, where children's well-being is intentionally sacrificed in the pursuit of greater profit and market share. Our [AI Safety Institute's](#) risk assessments have repeatedly determined that [industry attempts at self-regulation are failing](#) — with many implemented safeguards found to be ineffective or unreliable.

This carefully crafted legislation responds directly to that urgency. In response to feedback from industry and Senate and Assembly leadership, the sponsors accepted multiple amendments to tighten the language and focus on the most urgent harms — setting clear guardrails that protect kids while enabling industry to innovate. New York was the first state in the nation to enact guardrails on AI chatbots in last year's budget. This legislation builds on that work by seeking to *prevent* harm, and it is consistent with the positions you have taken in this year's budget and in previous bills you have signed into law to protect kids and teens from online harms. New York's kids and families cannot afford to wait for the protections this legislation will offer. We urge you to sign S.9051/A.10379 into law.

Thank you for considering our request on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Common Sense Media

Organizations

The Action Lab

Advocating Against Romance Scammers

AI for Education

All Girls Allowed

American Psychoanalytic Association (APsA)

Association for Child Psychoanalysis

Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network

AWK Survivor Advocate Attorneys

Breaking Generational Cycles

Buckets Over Bullying

Center for AI and Digital Policy (CAIDP)

Center for Countering Digital Hate

Center for Humane Technology

Center for Organizing

CHILD USA

Children's Justice International

Digital Childhood Institute

Encode AI

Enough Is Enough

Erik's Cause

FightCybercrime.org

Four Norms

Humans First

InnovateEDU

Institute for Family Studies

Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)

Innovation for Everyone

Irreplaceable

Liberty Law, Inc.

Lynn's Warriors

Marsh Law Firm PLLC

MikeTalksTech

Mothers Against Media Addiction (MAMA)

Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE-UFT)

NAACP-NY

National Alliance on Mental Illness, New York City

National Association of Consumer Advocates

National Association of Social Workers - New York

National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE)

National Crime Prevention Council

National Parents Union

NYC Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Association

New York State Psychological Association

New York State United Teachers

NH Traffick Free Coalition

No Trafficking Zone

Nurses United Against Human Trafficking

Open Media and Information Companies Initiative

Operation Shamrock

Parent Coalition for Student Privacy

Parents RISE!

ParentsTogether Action

Paving the Way Foundation

Project STAND

Public Citizen

Public Good Law Center

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)

Rights4Girls

Shield North Carolina

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE)

TDIforAccess

The Anxious Generation Movement

The Human Line Project

The Stop Trafficking Project

The Tech Oversight Project

Thriving in Freedom

Transparency Coalition

The Urban Assembly

UltraViolet Action

Yellowstone Human Trafficking Task Force

Young People's Alliance

Survivor Families

Family of McKenna Brown, Forever 16
Family of Nate Bronstein, Forever 15
Maria and Matthew Raine, Family of Adam Raine, Forever 16
Michelle Servi, Mother of Jack Servi, Forever 16
Kristin and Tom Bride, Family of Carson Bride, Forever 16

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Suzanne Garfinkle-Crowell, MD — Psychiatrist | Mt. Sinai School of Medicine
Suzanne Zeien MSW, LCSWR, ACSW — Psychotherapist
Tammy Horowitz, MD — Psychiatrist
Tamar Efrat — Psychologist
Tamar Gordon, PhD — Psychologist | Clinical Director, Gordon Therapy Group
Tara Mathews, PhD — Psychologist | Cornell University, Assistant Professor of Psychology
Tatianna Kufferath-Lin, PsyD — Psychologist
Terry Forliti — Survivor
Thomas DiBlasi, PhD — Psychologist
Thomas Kalman, MD — Psychiatrist | Cornell University, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry
Tiffany Yip, PhD — Psychologist | Fordham University, Professor of Psychology
Tim Stahl, PhD — Psychologist
Tim Wu, JD — Columbia University Professor of Law
Todd Essig, PhD — Psychologist | American Psychoanalytic Association, William Alanson White Institute
Tracy A. Prout, PhD — Psychologist | Yeshiva University
Tricia Shihui Wang, PhD — Psychologist
Tuba Tokgoz, PhD — Psychologist
Valerie Frankfeldt, PhD — Clinical Social Worker | Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Study Center
Valerie Gaus, PhD, ABPP — Psychologist
Valerie M. Raymond, PhD — Psychologist
Varun Kejriwal Goel, MD — Co-founder | Liberation Psychiatry
Vivien K. Zak, LCSW-R, BCD — Psychotherapist
William H. Gottdiener, PhD, ABPP — Psychologist | The City University of New York, Professor of Psychology

William Rush — Psychiatrist | New York
University, Clinical Instructor

Yael Monselise, LCSW — Hofstra University, PhD
Student

Yuliya Hryb — Psychiatrist

Zoe Bellatorre — Trafficking Survivor