



Common Sense Media Supports Connecticut S.B. 1356

[Common Sense Media](#) supports Connecticut Senate Bill 1356. Common Sense Media is dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing the trustworthy information, education, and independent voice they need to thrive. Our ratings, research, and resources reach more than 150 million users worldwide and 1.4 million educators every year. In Connecticut alone, more than 3,000 educators have registered to access Common Sense's [digital citizenship and literacy materials](#) for sharing with their students.

Common Sense applauds Connecticut for working to strengthen its consumer privacy law, including improving data minimization protections and protecting sensitive data. The [vast majority](#) of Americans believe that they have little or no control over their personal data. Many report that companies are too opaque about what they do with user data for individuals to even have a say, and the majority of surveyed Americans who report taking their data privacy seriously think that even their making good privacy decisions would have little or no impact on whether companies actually collect their data. [Consumer research](#) suggests Americans are troubled by this state of affairs—74% of whom rate their data privacy as highly important to them. But there are also practical concerns: lack of robust data privacy increases the risk of abuse, fraud, and identity theft, and may dissuade users from visiting certain sites or taking advantage of certain internet resources.

Common Sense writes to highlight in particular its support for the strengthened privacy protections for children and teenagers. Data privacy concerns are particularly acute for kids. [Research](#) makes it clear that concerns about kids' internet privacy are growing—as many as 89% of Americans are somewhat or very concerned about social media companies collecting data about kids. Common Sense's research suggests that kids' internet usage is at an [all-time high](#). Teens are spending an average of 4.5 hours per day on their phones, with about a quarter of them spending as much as 5 to 8 hours in front of their screens every day. Nearly [half of teens](#) report that they feel addicted to their phones. And children and teens must use technology for educational purposes, meaning that k-12 students in Connecticut and elsewhere don't have the option to avoid tech and the data privacy concerns that raises. As a result, young people are being surveilled by platforms and having their behavior tracked, packaged, and sold to third-parties at an alarming rate. Worse still, young people are more susceptible than older users to targeted ads and to data mining. Children don't often understand that they are sharing information. Teens are far more likely to overshare information about themselves online thanks in part to their unique reliance on media platforms, and in part to the underdevelopment of the parts of their brain responsible for dealing with judgment and long-term consequences. Research suggests young people are less able to identify targeted advertising and, in many cases, don't fully understand that features like algorithmic personalization both require large amounts of their data to function properly and make it harder for teens to stop or decrease screen time.

Among the provisions of S.B. 1356 that we particularly support, this bill offers strong



protections against the sale of minor's data and its processing for targeted advertising, and will prevent companies from pretending they don't have young people on their sites:

Strong Protections Against Sale of Minors' Data and Targeted Advertising —

Common Sense strongly supports Sec. 9. Section 42-529(b), which would prohibit targeted advertising and the sale of minors' data. This protects children and teens from having their behavior tracked, analyzed, and monetized.

Common Sense notes, in addition, that there seems to be a duplicative section addressing targeted advertising and sale of data in Sec 42-520(a), but appearing to enable a consent carve-out for a smaller subset of youth. Section 42-529(b) explicitly does not have a consent carve-out, and Common Sense believes this Section controls and overrides any other sections. However, we recommend removing the duplicative provision in Section 42-520(a). Other states, such as Maryland, have banned targeted ads and the sale of minor's data, and there is no reason Connecticut's youth should not have the same protections.

Prevent Companies From Pretending They Don't Have Kids On their Sites —

Common Sense strongly supports the improvements to the bill's knowledge standard for when companies must acknowledge they have young people on their sites. Under the bill's updated definitions, combined with Section 42-529(b), companies will no longer be able to intentionally ignore young people on their sites. "Knowledge" will mean "actual knowledge or knowledge fairly implied on the basis of objective circumstances." And importantly, sites cannot sell, or process for targeted advertising, information about consumers when they "know or should know" that consumers are under 18.

Common Sense applauds Connecticut for bringing forward these important privacy improvements at a critical time for children, teens, and all people online.

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