



THE ANXIOUS GENERATION  SCHOOLS BEYOND SCREENS

Support for AB 1064 - Leading Ethical AI Development (LEAD) for Kids

Monday, September 8, 2025

To California State Senators:

We represent a coalition of organizations dedicated to the safety, privacy, and well-being of children in our increasingly digital and AI-driven world. Together, we advocate for the passage of Assembly Bill [1064](#) (Bauer-Kahan), which establishes critical regulations for the development and use of artificial intelligence systems that interact with children.

AI is becoming increasingly integrated into products and services essential to the lives of children. According to our research, [7 in 10 teens have used general AI applications](#), and [nearly one in three children aged 0 to 8 have already used AI](#). By May 2025, [nearly three-quarters of teens reported having tried AI companions, with over half using them regularly](#). About one in three use these tools for social or relational purposes and often find interactions as satisfying as with real friends. At the same time, roughly one-third of users report negative experiences, including discomfort with chatbot behavior or choosing to confide serious matters in AI instead of people. The use of these products is occurring without sufficient protection for children. The lack of sufficient safeguards, coupled with the pattern of increasing actual use by teens, warrants immediate attention.

Children and teens are increasingly using AI products, but a lack of safety standards leaves them vulnerable to serious harm. AI can manipulate, mislead, and expose young users to false or harmful content. Systems are designed to maximize engagement through humanlike conversations and push notifications, prioritizing profit over well-being. Based on our testing, these bots, whether [Meta AI](#), [Character.AI](#), or others, easily produce harmful sexual content, stereotypes, and dangerous 'advice' that can have a life-threatening impact on kids.

Companion chatbot design features regularly appear in generative AI chatbot products that are not intended to meet a user's social needs or induce emotional attachment. The inclusion of these features increases the risk that young users form emotional attachments or perceive outputs as authoritative, personalized guidance.

Already, this technology has resulted in real-world harms to kids in [California](#) and other parts of the [nation](#). In *Raine v. OpenAI*, a 16-year-old boy allegedly developed a deep emotional dependency on a chatbot that validated his suicidal thoughts, discouraged him from seeking help from his family, provided extensive technical instructions on suicide methods, encouraged him to consume alcohol to inhibit his survival instinct, and even helped draft a note to his parents to let them know, "they did nothing wrong", culminating in his death by suicide. In another example, *Garcia v. Character Technologies*, a 14-year-old boy was allegedly groomed and exposed to hypersexualized interactions by a chatbot intentionally designed to mimic human relationships, which ultimately contributed to his death by suicide.

While these tragedies are the first known AI companion-related deaths of their kind, without meaningful action, they unfortunately will not be the last. These resulting harms are not incidental but the direct result of design choices by companies that intentionally simulate social attachment and emotional intimacy; by exploiting children's psychological vulnerabilities, including their innate drive for attachment, tendency to anthropomorphize humanlike technologies, and limited ability to distinguish between simulated and authentic human interactions, industry repeatedly chooses to prioritize profit and market share over the well-being of children like Adam and Sewell. While the technology offers great promise, California must take bold action now to protect children from harmful AI companion chatbots.

AB 1064, if passed, would lead the nation in establishing guardrails that protect children and families from the devastating harms of AI companion chatbots. In response to the state's current fiscal challenges, the author accepted amendments to narrow the bill's scope and focus on addressing the most urgent and harmful uses of AI affecting children – AI companion chatbots.

Key aspects of AB 1064 include:

- Limits operators of [companion chatbots](#) from providing the product to children under 18 unless they have guardrails to protect against harm.
- Guardrails include restrictions on the product from encouraging self-harm, disordered eating, or illegal activity, engaging in erotic or sexually explicit interactions, or providing mental health therapy.

- Enforcement for violations of the act includes corrective actions, civil penalties, and civil actions.

AB 1064 stems from the urgent need to manage the integration of AI in tools and services regularly engaged with by our children and teens. This bill sets limits on dangerous AI companion chatbots to address the growing concerns about safety and the psychological impacts of AI on children. By creating clear guardrails to protect kids, this bill enables industry to innovate safely.

In light of the known and unknown impacts that AI companion chatbots can have on young users, including their well-being and overall psychological development, we urge your strong support for AB 1064. Your support is essential to protect our children and teens from the complex threats posed by the use of unregulated AI.

Thank you for considering our call to action on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

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