

Maryland Age Appropriate Design Code

The Maryland Age Appropriate Design Code Bill is a **chance for Maryland to lead the nation in providing safety and privacy to children** online by design and default.

Why it's needed

- The digital world is designed by adults, for adults, often in ways that are risky for children.
- We have nutrition labels on food packaging, rigorous testing for cribs and car seats, and yet the technology children use daily from the youngest of ages have little to no safeguards.
- Tech companies design these services to maximize and monetize children's attention, prioritizing profit over children's safety. Common features nudge children into risky behaviours, expose them to predators, recommend harmful material, and encourage compulsive behaviour. For example:
 - 75% of the top social media platforms use AI to [recommend children's profiles to strangers](#).¹
 - Leaked Instagram documents said the platform is exacerbating body image problems for [1 in 3 teen girls](#). 6% of US teens link their interest in suicide directly to the platform.²

What the Code would do

- The Code would require companies to prioritize the online privacy and safety of children in the design of any digital product or service that children in Maryland are likely to access.
- It would restrict data collection and profiling of children in ways that are detrimental to them. This would reduce the risk of harmful conduct, contracts, risky connections, and addictive online features being pushed towards Maryland's children.
- It would require high privacy settings by default in a variety of ways, for example: prohibiting the collection of geolocation information by default, the collection of any personal data that is not necessary to deliver a service which a child requested, and prohibiting the use of "dark patterns" or "nudge" techniques to manipulate children into weakening their privacy protections.

Why we know it will work

- In 2022, California passed the AADC to build specific protections for children onto California's existing law. California's statute shows its possible for states to enact the AADC. Now is Maryland's turn to lead.
- The Bill, and California's statute, are based on the UK's Age Appropriate Design Code, which has already prompted Silicon Valley's largest companies to innovate in the interests of children. For instance:
 - Instagram and TikTok disabled direct messages between children and adult strangers.

¹ [Risky-By-Design | Friend suggestion systems \(riskyby.design\)](#)

² [Teenage girls, body image and Instagram's 'perfect storm' | Instagram | The Guardian](#)

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- YouTube turned off autoplay for users under 18 and turned on break and bedtime reminders by default.
- On Roblox, 'chat filtering' is switched on by default and all chat messages are scanned for language that is contrary to Roblox's terms of service.
- Children in Maryland deserve these protections too.