[Supporting California Senate Bill No. 287 (Skinner) - Features that Harm Child Users: Civil Penalty]

Resolution supporting California State Senate Bill No. 287, introduced by Senator Nancy Skinner, that would prohibit a social media platform, as defined, from using a design, algorithm, or feature that the platform knows, or which by the exercise of reasonable care should have known, causes child users to harmful practices and/or behaviors, including experience addiction to the social media platform.

WHEREAS, Algorithms are designed and used on social media platforms to sort content in a user's feed, prioritizing content that the user sees, which can in turn increase the likelihood that the user will want to see and engage with that algorithm-selected content; and

WHEREAS, Research demonstrates that social media companies' algorithms direct their users to specific content, including content that promotes dangerous and harmful practices; and

WHEREAS, Research also shows that algorithms do not particularly respond to content desired or relevant to the user, rather target the user with content chosen by the algorithm; and

WHEREAS, An analysis of YouTube found that videos got millions of views even though they were not relevant to the user but were chosen by the algorithm and that 64 percent of users came across videos that seemed false or untrue, while 60 percent encountered videos with people taking part in dangerous or troubling behavior; and

WHEREAS, Studies have shown that social media has a powerful effect on the brain, and it can create stimulating effects similar to addiction; and
WHEREAS, Adolescence is the second biggest period of growth in the brain, which makes teens particularly susceptible to addictiveness of social media, as their brains and social skills are rapidly developing; and

WHEREAS, A recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) revealed that teens who use social media more than three hours per day may be at heightened risk for mental health problems; and

WHEREAS, Since the pandemic there has been an uptick in depression and anxiety among teens, specifically low self-esteem, disordered eating, body image issues and suicidal thoughts; and

WHEREAS, A survey published by the nonprofit research organization Common Sense Media found that overall screen use among teens and tweens increased by 17 percent from 2019 to 2021 - growing more rapidly than in the four years prior; and

WHEREAS, The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) published the abuse of social media by criminal drug networks to expand their reach, create new markets, and target new clientele, including the sale of deadly fake fentanyl and methamphetamine pills, often to unsuspecting teenagers; and

WHEREAS, The DEA has also identified that drug traffickers advertise on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter and YouTube with secret codes and emojis that make it easier to evade; and

WHEREAS, In 2021, the California Department of Public Health reported 5,722 fentanyl-related overdose deaths in California, 224 of which were teens ages 15-19 years old; and

WHEREAS, SB 287 bill would prohibit social media companies from using algorithms that could lead children to buy fentanyl, harm themselves or others, die by suicide, or develop
an eating disorder as well as algorithms that would lead anyone to buy illegal firearms, including ghost guns; and

WHEREAS, SB 287 would also hold social media companies accountable for using algorithms that influence children to harm themselves or others and that prompt people to buy illegal guns or substances; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors supports Senate Bill No. 287 which would prohibit a social media platform, as defined, from using a design, algorithm, or feature that the platform knows, or which by the exercise of reasonable care should have known, causes child users to do any of certain things, including experience addiction to the social media platform; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco distribute this resolution to San Francisco’s State Legislative Delegation and to California Governor Gavin Newsom.
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February 14, 2023 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED
Ayes: 11 - Chan, Dorsey, Engardio, Mandelman, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 2/14/2023 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution, not being signed by the Mayor within the time limit as set forth in Section 3.103 of the Charter, or time waived pursuant to Board Rule 2.14.2, became effective without her approval in accordance with the provision of said Section 3.103 of the Charter or Board Rule 2.14.2.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board