

1 **JOINT RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN APPLICATION**
2 **RATINGS BOARD FOR INTERNET READY DEVICES**

3 2020 GENERAL SESSION

4 STATE OF UTAH

5 **Chief Sponsor: Susan Pulsipher**

6 Senate Sponsor: Todd Weiler

8 **LONG TITLE**

9 **General Description:**

10 This joint resolution calls on the United States Congress to make recommendations to
11 vendors and distributors of applications and to leading technology companies.

12 **Highlighted Provisions:**

13 This resolution:

14 ▶ calls on the United States Congress to recommend that vendors and distributors of
15 applications establish an independent application ratings board, comprised of
16 industry representatives, child development, child protection, and internet safety
17 subject matter experts to:

- 18 • establish new criteria for what types of application content and in-application
19 risks result in specified age-appropriate application ratings;
- 20 • review application ratings and descriptions of the most downloaded applications
21 and the downloadable content of those applications; and
- 22 • impose sanctions for noncompliance; and

23 ▶ calls on leading technology companies to:

- 24 • manufacture internet-ready devices with user-friendly parental controls;
- 25 • close loopholes that permit the bypassing of parental controls;
- 26 • build in age-based, default safety settings; and
- 27 • provide selective application shutoff for bedtime and school hours.

28 **Special Clauses:**

29 None

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Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

WHEREAS, internet-ready devices, and the applications that run on such devices, are used by millions of minors daily;

WHEREAS, some downloaded applications often include content that is not consistent with the age rating, content descriptors, interactive elements, or description of such applications;

WHEREAS, clarity on the rating of applications is a critical part of social responsibility on the part of vendors and distributors of applications when including applications in their database for their users to download;

WHEREAS, parents of minors deserve transparency and accuracy on the ratings of applications and the meaning behind those ratings;

WHEREAS, no third-party organization is holding vendors and distributors of applications accountable to ensure that application age ratings are consistent and accurate across devices and that application descriptions adequately explain the content and advertising available to minors in such applications;

WHEREAS, no third-party organization has the authority to impose sanctions for nondisclosures related to application content and advertising;

WHEREAS, applications contain unique risks of both exposure to content and predators, so a specific application rating system that takes these unique risk factors into account is needed;

WHEREAS, social media is increasingly being used to recruit and sexually exploit young users for sexual abuse or sex trafficking;

WHEREAS, social media is increasingly used for sexual harassment and sexualized bullying, including sending unsolicited sexually explicit images, repeated requests for sexually explicit imagery, sexual images that are not consensually shared, and unwanted exposure to pornographic images;

WHEREAS, recent studies indicate that excessive use of social media, particularly in

58 young girls, can lead to an increase in depressive symptoms;

59 WHEREAS, suicide rates, depression, and mental health issues among adolescents in
60 the United States have been found to increase as social media use has surged within the same
61 age group;

62 WHEREAS, popular applications often do not include parental controls or have
63 inadequate parental controls;

64 WHEREAS, the parental controls provided on internet-ready devices are often
65 insufficient, ignore the age of users, contain loopholes, and are difficult to implement, leaving
66 minors unprotected from sexual abuse and exploitation; and

67 WHEREAS, the improper use of internet-ready devices during school hours contributes
68 to student distraction and lower test scores and the use of such devices during bedtime hours
69 can lead to sleep disturbance:

70 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah:

71 (1) calls on the United States Congress to recommend that vendors and distributors of
72 applications establish an independent application ratings board, comprised of industry
73 representatives, child development, child protection, and internet safety subject matter experts
74 to:

75 (a) establish new criteria for what types of application content and in-application risks
76 result in specified age-appropriate application ratings;

77 (b) review application ratings and descriptions of the most downloaded applications
78 and the downloadable content of those applications; and

79 (c) impose sanctions for noncompliance; and

80 (2) calls on leading technology companies to:

81 (a) manufacture internet-ready devices with user-friendly parental controls;

82 (b) close loopholes that permit the bypassing of parental controls;

83 (c) build in age-based, default safety settings; and

84 (d) provide selective application shutoff for bedtime and school hours.