Joint Committee on Advanced Information Technology, the Internet and Cybersecurity 2025-2026 (194th) Bill Summary

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Bill Number: H. 4229
Title: An Act protecting children from addictive social media feeds
Lead Sponsor: Representative William F. MacGregor
Hearing Date: July 10, 2025
Report Date: September 8, 2025
See Senate Filing: S. 30

Executive Summary: Prohibits operators from providing algorithmic content recommendations to users under 18 unless they can verify the user is an adult through commercially reasonable methods. Bans social media platforms from sending notifications to minors between midnight and 6 AM. The Massachusetts Attorney General is tasked with developing regulations that specify acceptable age verification methods, including at least one option that doesn't require government ID or compromises user anonymity. Violations can result in civil penalties of up to $5,000 per violation. Allows Attorney General rulemaking.

Legislative History: New File

Summary:
Defines "Addictive feed" as a personalized content delivery system that recommends, selects, or prioritizes media based on user data or device information. Unless any of the following conditions are met, alone or in combination with one another:

- Content based on non-persistent information
- User-selected privacy/accessibility settings
- Explicitly requested content or subscriptions
- Direct private communications
- Search results
- Sequential content from the same creator
- Content necessary for legal compliance

Defines "Addictive social media platform" a website, online service, online application, or mobile application, that offers or provides users an addictive feed as a significant part of the services provided by such website, online service, online application, or mobile application.

"Covered minor" A user under 18 when the operator has actual knowledge of their age

"Covered user" Any user in Massachusetts who isn't operating or affiliated with the platform

"Minor" Anyone under 18 years old

"Covered operator": Any person or entity that operates or provides an addictive social media platform

Section 2.

It shall be unlawful for a covered operator to provide an addictive feed to a covered user unless the covered operator has used commercially reasonable and technically feasible methods to determine that the covered user is not a covered minor.

It shall be unlawful for a covered operator to, between the hours of 12 a.m. and 6 a.m. in the commonwealth's time zone, send notifications to a covered user unless the covered operator has used commercially reasonable and technically feasible methods to determine that the covered user is not a covered minor.

Section 3.

This section tasks the Massachusetts Attorney General with creating implementation guidelines:

(a) The AG must create regulations defining "commercially reasonable and technically feasible" age verification methods.

(b) The AG must consider various factors when creating these regulations:

- Platform size, resources, and technical capabilities
- Cost and effectiveness of age verification techniques
- Platform audience and industry practices
- Impact on user safety, utility, and experience

(c) Regulations must specify accuracy levels and provide multiple verification options, including at least one method that either:

- Doesn't rely solely on government-issued ID, OR
- Allows users to remain anonymous to the platform

(d) Creates a "safe harbor" provision: if operators follow the regulations and don't determine someone is a minor, they can presume the user is an adult unless they gain actual knowledge otherwise.

(e) Data Protection: Information collected for age verification can only be used for that purpose and must be deleted immediately after verification, except when required by other laws.

Section 4.

Operators cannot punish users by withholding, degrading, or charging more for products/services simply because they're not allowed to provide addictive feeds to that user.

Section 5.

The law does not contradict federal COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act) requirements.

Section 6.

The Attorney General can impose civil penalties up to $5,000 per violation

The AG must create a public website for receiving complaints about platform compliance.

Section 7.

Grants the Attorney General broad authority to create rules and regulations needed to implement and enforce the law.