

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

2020 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Susan Pulsipher

Senate Sponsor: _____

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill calls for the establishment of an application ratings board to enforce consistent and accurate age and content ratings of applications on internet-ready devices and calls on technology companies to ensure the implementation of user-friendly and streamlined parental controls on devices used by minors.

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

- ▶ calls on technology and application development companies to establish an application ratings board, comprised of industry representatives, child development, child protection, and internet safety subject matter experts to:
 - establish new criteria for what types of application content and in-application risks result in specified age-appropriate application ratings;
 - review application ratings and descriptions of the most downloaded applications and the downloadable content of those applications; and
 - impose sanctions for noncompliance; and
- ▶ calls on leading technology companies to:
 - manufacture internet-ready devices, including iPhones, Android devices, and Chromebooks, with user-friendly parental controls;
 - close loopholes that permit the bypassing of parental controls;



- 28 • build in age-based, default safety settings; and
- 29 • provide selective application shutoff for bedtime and school hours.

30 **Special Clauses:**

31 None



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

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

36 WHEREAS, the most downloaded applications often include content that is not
37 consistent with the age rating or description of such applications;

38 WHEREAS, clarity on the rating of applications is a critical part of social responsibility
39 on the part of leading technology companies when including applications in their database for
40 their users to download;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

63 WHEREAS, many providers and users of interactive computer services covered by the
64 Communications Act of 1934, 47 U.S.C. Sec. 230 et seq., as amended through February 8,
65 1996, have failed to comply with basic best business practices in connection with the
66 protection of minors from harmful content, therefore instigating interest in a review of the
67 status of such providers and users under 47 U.S.C. Sec. 230 unless the business practices of
68 such providers and users come into alignment with reasonable care and best business practices
69 of such providers and users appropriate for protecting minors;

70 WHEREAS, popular applications often do not include parental controls or have
71 inadequate parental controls;

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

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

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

79 (1) calls on technology and application development companies to establish an
80 application ratings board, comprised of industry representatives, child development, child
81 protection, and internet safety subject matter experts to:

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

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

86 (c) impose sanctions for noncompliance; and

87 (2) calls on leading technology companies to:

88 (a) manufacture internet-ready devices, including iPhones, Android devices, and
89 Chromebooks, with user-friendly parental controls;

- 90 (b) close loopholes that permit the bypassing of parental controls;
- 91 (c) build in age-based, default safety settings; and
- 92 (d) provide selective application shutoff for bedtime and school hours.