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AB-56 Social media: warning labels. (2025-2026)

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Assembly Bill No. 56

CHAPTER 671

An act to add Chapter 25 (commencing with Section 28000) to Division 20 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to social media platforms.

[Approved by Governor October 13, 2025. Filed with Secretary of State October 13, 2025.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 56, Bauer-Kahan. Social media: warning labels.

Existing law generally regulates social media platforms, including, among other laws, the Protecting Our Kids from Social Media Addiction Act that prohibits an operator of an addictive internet-based service or application, including a social media platform, from providing an addictive feed, as defined, to a minor user, except as prescribed.

This bill would enact the Social Media Warning Law that would require a covered platform, as defined, to display a certain black box warning to certain users each day the user initially accesses the social media platform, again after 3 hours of cumulative active use, and thereafter at least once per hour of cumulative active use, as prescribed.

This bill would specify that its provisions shall not be interpreted to serve as the basis for a private right of action, as specified. The bill would make its provisions operative on January 1, 2027, and would declare these provisions severable.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: no Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Social media provides an important tool for communication and information sharing. Approximately 95 percent of minor teenagers say that they use at least one social media platform, and more than one-third report using social media almost constantly.

(b) As the United States Surgeon General has reported, recent evidence has identified “reasons for concern” about social media usage by children and adolescents. This evidence includes a study concluding that the risk of poor mental health outcomes doubles for children and adolescents who use social media at least three hours per day and research finding that social media usage is linked to a variety of negative health outcomes, including low self-esteem and disordered eating for adolescent girls.

(c) Further, per the Surgeon General’s Social Media and Youth Mental Health advisory, “Excessive and problematic use of social media can harm children and adolescents by disrupting important healthy behaviors. Social media platforms are often designed to maximize user engagement, which has the potential to encourage excessive use and behavioral dysregulation. Push

notifications, autoplay, infinite scroll, quantifying and displaying popularity (i.e., 'likes'), and algorithms that leverage user data to serve content recommendations are some examples of these features that maximize engagement.”

(d) Heavier usage of social media also leads to less healthy sleep patterns and sleep quality, which can in turn exacerbate both physical and mental health problems.

(e) Evidence cited in lawsuits against social media companies for the harms caused against children supports the use of warning labels to advise users of the potential harms of these features. Lawsuits have cited internal documents from companies detailing their deliberate targeting of children in order to bring them on the social media platform and to keep them on the platform. Internal documents have also revealed that social media platforms are aware that their features can impact the health and development of children's brains and mental health. They understand that children cannot resist some of these features using their underdeveloped discipline and capitalize on this in order to keep them on their platforms.

(f) Both California and the United States as a whole are facing an ongoing youth mental health crisis, with rates of adolescent suicides, depressive episodes, and feelings of sadness and hopelessness on the rise in recent years.

(g) Governments across the globe have effectively employed black box style warnings to educate the public regarding goods that pose a risk of harm to public health.

(h) For these reasons, it is essential that California act to ensure that users, their families, and the public are warned of the risks of social media use, and requiring the display of a black box style warning is an appropriate mechanism for doing so.

SEC. 2. Chapter 25 (commencing with Section 28000) is added to Division 20 of the Health and Safety Code, to read:

CHAPTER 25. Social Media Warning Law

28000. This chapter shall be known as the Social Media Warning Law.

28001. (a) For purposes of this chapter, “covered platform” has the same meaning as addictive internet-based service or application, as defined in paragraph (1) of subdivision (b) of Section 27000.5.

(b) “Covered platform” does not mean an internet website, online service, online application, or mobile application whose primary function is any of the following:

(1) The sale of goods or services.

(2) Cloud storage.

(3) Electronic mail.

(4) Direct messaging, in which communications are viewable only by the sender and an intended recipient, that does not allow public content dissemination, interaction, or access.

(5) Communication internal to an organization.

(6) Internal organizational collaboration services that are not offered to the general public or consumers outside the organization.

28002. (a) (1) (A) For each calendar day in which a user uses a covered platform, the covered platform shall display, pursuant to subparagraph (B), the black box warning described in subdivision (b) to the user when the user initially accesses the covered platform.

(B) The black box warning required by this paragraph shall be displayed clearly and continuously for a duration of at least 10 seconds, unless the user affirmatively dismisses the warning by clicking on a conspicuous “X” icon. That black box warning shall be displayed in a manner that occupies at least 25 percent of the screen or window that the user is using to access the covered platform.

(C) A covered platform shall not be required to display the black box warning required by this paragraph to a user if it has reasonably determined that the user is over 17 years of age.

(2) (A) For each calendar day in which a user uses a covered platform, the covered platform shall display, pursuant to subparagraph (B), the black box warning described in subdivision (b) after three hours of cumulative active use and thereafter at least once per hour of cumulative active use.

(B) The black box warning required by this paragraph shall be displayed clearly and continuously for a duration of at least 30 seconds, without providing the ability to bypass or click through the warning, in a manner that occupies at least 75

percent of the screen or window that the user is using to access the covered platform.

(C) A covered platform shall not be required to display the black box warning required by this paragraph to a user if it has reasonably determined that the user is over 17 years of age.

(b) The black box warning consists of the following text displayed clearly, conspicuously, and legibly in black text on a white background:

“The Surgeon General has warned that while social media may have benefits for some young users, social media is associated with significant mental health harms and has not been proven safe for young users.”

(c) The provision of the notice required by this section or a user affirmatively dismissing the notice do not waive, release, otherwise limit, or serve as a defense to, any claim, including claims premised on failure to warn, other than a claim premised on a violation of this section.

(d) Nothing in this chapter shall be interpreted to serve as the basis for a private right of action under this chapter or any other law.

(e) The provisions of this chapter are severable. If any provision of this chapter or its application is held invalid, that invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application.

(f) This chapter shall become operative on January 1, 2027.