

Submitter: Kathy Masarie
On Behalf Of: OR Unplugged Coalition
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1546

Thank you, Chairman Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson & members of this committee for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 1546.

I am Kathy Masarie, co- founder of OR Unplugged Coalition, advocating to protect kids from harms of screens since the 80s and grandmother of five in the Portland area

I do not and have never received funding from technology companies.

As a pediatrician, I have always focused on prevention and what people NEED to thrive. AI, at so many levels, interferes with these basic needs. Human beings are healthiest in communities of close relationships. When a child has a nurturing caregiver to come back to, they feel safe going out to explore the world. Children who experience face to face connections and empathy, learn the give and take needed to resolve conflict and get along. Even touch itself is nurturing for brain healing, These components are the glue that keeps families and communities together.

Today, we have worsened our ability to connect by two decades of imposing unregulated Internet exposure on children with algorithms designed to addict and isolate us from what matters. This has resulted in unprecedented levels of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and even cognitive deficits and a “touch-starved” world. As adults, we allowed this to happen. We fell for the false technology company promises.

Now we are facing decisions about how far to go with AI, a platform that pretends to care, unrealistically agrees with everything said, excessively gives compliments, strokes the ego so much the user expects everyone to comply with all demands.

Now we know better
Now we can do better.

The stress and trauma that so many have experienced has led to changes in the wiring of the brains, creating a hyper-aroused state, making everyday life extremely challenging. There is a need, a longing for healing and nurturing. Loved ones, friends, and professional healers in mental health are not easily found. And when anxiety kicks in, the ease of talking to a Chatbot is appealing and initially satisfying

Artificial intelligence meets none of the needs to thrive and interferes with all of them, especially for our children.

I so appreciate that SB 1546 puts guardrails on Chatbot for everyone. It means we are offering a systemic solution to harmful, inappropriate AI use. Besides, if "we help the children but don't meet the needs of the adults, our work will have little impact."

Together, let's do all we can to stop the future damage of AI Chatbots, by stopping it in its tracks NOW. Please pass SB 1546.

Thank you