

Good Morning everyone. My name is Kathy Keller Jones and I was a K - 8th grade school counselor for Portland Public Schools for many years starting in the late 1980s, and I can give you a dish of reality about how technology has affected the development of our kids over time: first TV only, but the amount and content made a difference. Then in the 1990s gaming gradually became more and more prevalent, usually involving boys and dads and it clearly affected boys' ability to concentrate in school and play happily with friends and talk about anything but games. Eventually as the games became more and more attractive I remember the 8th grade boys coming to me to tell me how upset they were about their younger 5th grade brothers who now were playing video games all the time and had lost their interest in the family and how it was changing their personalities. In middle school there were incidents of girls attacking other girls on line. And as more and more girls had phones and spent more and more time on phones, many girls became depressed and anxious when what they were really needed was face-to-face relationships with girls they could trust. And here we are. Before we can say we have figured all this out, we have AI potentially coming into our kids' lives!

This is such an opportunity to make sure that AI is used properly with our young people. At first the Big Beautiful Bill forbid the states to regulate AI. Fortunately 2 of our national Senators, a Democrat and a Republican, with the support of Public Citizen, changed to Bill to allow states to build appropriate guidance around AI. Let's not let our beautiful children be raised by machines that pretend to be friends, which is the road to poor mental health and disconnection to the family and friends who are so critical to healthy development. Let's not let AI interfere with the learning of our children at any age. We want our teens to grow up with a sense of who they are, that they are supported by caring people in their world, that they can make a difference in this world, and have empathy for others.