Thank you, Chairman Pham, Vice-Chairs Edwards and Javadi and members of the committee for allowing me to testify in support of SB 1546A. I am Kathy Masarie, co-founder of OR Unplugged Coalition and grandmother of five. Neither I nor OR Unplugged have received funding from tech companies.

As a pediatrician and life coach, my work has always focused on prevention and on what people *need* to thrive —especially children.

Human beings are healthiest in communities of close relationships. Through nurturing, face-to-face connections, empathy, and even physical touch, children learn emotional regulation, conflict resolution, and how to belong. These are the bonds that hold our families and our communities together.

For two decades, tech companies have inflicted unprecedented harm on our children. Now tech companies are offering AI Chatbots to solve the loneliness crisis they helped create in all ages. I am skeptical.

Chatbots are designed to create "parasocial relationships," which exploit a child's natural need for attachment, trust, and validation. Constant, uncritical interaction with AI bots—removes the necessary challenges, disagreements, and social feedback children need to develop emotional regulation
and cannot replace the complex, messy, and necessary interactions with real people. I wonder when we will see "Digital Induced Attachment Disorder" become a diagnosis we have to acknowledge

On top of relational harm, Chatbots are dangerous in many other ways! Despite safety filters, testing shows AI companions frequently produce inappropriate content, including

- sexual grooming (like teaching an 11 yr old how to have a "romantic weekend with an "older boy" who is actually a Roblox sexual predator"),
- self-harm (like saying "self-harm 'felt good' " or "lets die together and be free together")
- violence (like saying : if your parents don't let you use your computer, kill them) and
- inappropriate safety advice-(like telling a kid how to touch a live wire with a penny or use a knife)

One study of 35,000 interactions, showed a "harmful message" every five minutes.

We **NOW** know better. Now we can **DO** better

Please pass SB 1546A and stop the damage NOW before it deepens. Thank you

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RESOURCES

1. InternetSafety101.org: **AI Assistants for Children and Teens, a quick guide for parents and educators** PDF
   https://internetsafety101.org/navigable-guide/ai-assistants-for-children-teens/?download_pdf=1

2. **How to Protect kids from AI Dangers** by Mitchell Douglass, MD, child psychiatrist and Danielle Johnson, PhD, psychologist at The University of Kansas Health System Oct 23,2025
   https://www.kansashealthsystem.com/news-room/blog/2025/10/how-to-protect-kids-from-ai-dangers#:~:text=%E2%80%9CIt%20is%20always%20available.,Johnson.&text=Video%20Player%20is%20loading.,-Play%20Video&text=This%20is%20a%20modal%20window.,-This%20video%20is

3. **AI Toys are NOT Safe for Kids ADVISORY** by Fairplay, Childhood Beyond Brands   January, 2026
   https://fairplayforkids.org/pf/aitoyadvisory/

4. **APA urges Senate to regulate AI chatbots, citing grave risks to youth development**   and urges lawmakers to protect kids and adolescents from the risks of artificial intelligence. September 16, 2025
   https://www.apaservices.org/advocacy/news/chatbots-testimony

5. **AI Psychological Harms Research Coalition** is a network of leading academic and professional institutions focused on gathering evidence, advancing research, and deepening our shared understanding of the novel risks to human psychological health posed by the use of AI. https://aiphrc.org/

6. **Heat Report: "Darling, Please Come Back Soon":** Sexual Exploitation and Violence on Character AI Kids' Accounts.At:https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6578d6032532c06f62ef47ce/t/68e3fd05015ca91a4dbfad75/175977190
   9375/HEAT_REPORT_CharacterAI_DO_28_09_25.pdf. Adult researchers from Heat Intiative and ParentsTogetherAction held 50 hours of conversation with AI chatbots using accounts registered to children. They found the chatbots engaged in a pattern of deeply concerning behaviors, some of which emerged within minutes of engagement. They logged 669 harmful interactions across 50 hours of chats, averaging one harmful interaction every 5 minutes. Conclusion: Character AI is not a safe platform for children under 18. Character AI, parents & policymakers all have a role to play in keeping children safe from chatbot abuse. Copies of chats with harmful interactions are included.

7. **The Dark Side of AI Companionship: A Taxonomy of Harmful Algorithmic Behaviors in Human-AI Relationships.** By Zhange, R. et al, CHI '25: Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems. Article #13, Pages 1-17. April 25, 2025. https://doi.org/10.1145/3706598.3713429; https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3706598.3713429.   Research funded by the Singapore ministry of Education Academic Research Fund Tier 1.
   A study of >35K conversations between >10K users and an AI chatbot. Researchers were able to identify 7 categories of harmful AI algorithmic behaviors: 1. relational transgressions, 2. harassment, abuse, antisocial acts & violence, 3. verbal abuse & hate, 4. substance use & self-harm, 5. mis/disinformation, 6. privacy violations and 7. Relational harm. Ie harm to interpersonal relationships and relational capacities. These harmful behaviors stem from 4 distinct roles that AI plays: perpetrator, instigator, facilitator, and enabler.