



MARYLAND  
SCHOOL  
COUNSELOR  
ASSOCIATION

**Committee(s):** House Appropriations Committee  
House Economic Matters Committee

**Bill Number:** House Bill 1119 – Algorithmic Addiction Fund – Establishment

**Hearing Date:** February 28, 2024

**Position:** Support

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The Maryland School Counselor Association (MSCA) supports *House Bill 1119 – Algorithmic Addiction Fund—Establishment* which seeks to establish the Algorithmic Addiction Fund to retain any revenue received by the State relating to judgements or settlements against technology or social media companies. School counselors recognize the impact interactive digital technology, including social media has on student learning, wellbeing, and safety. Young people are susceptible to the mental health effects caused by the manipulative algorithms used by social media platforms. While social interactions are necessary for adolescent development, companies put profits ahead of safety when they fail to protect users from the risks of social media addiction. MSCA supports establishing this fund as it will allow the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to identify where the state is in combating social media addiction (algorithmic addiction); determine what is needed for prevention, intervention, and treatment; and implement prevention and treatment efforts.

Young people are susceptible to the mental health effects caused by the manipulative algorithms used by social media platforms. While social interactions are necessary for adolescent development, companies put profits ahead of safety when they fail to protect users from the risks of social media addiction.

Online harm has real-world consequences that we as school counselors see daily, as we provide mental health support and guidance to students. Unfortunately, chronic social media use goes hand-in-hand with mental health concerns among children and teens because they're still developing socially and neurologically. High levels of depression and anxiety are stoked by constant use of online social media platforms. This spills into the classroom and affects academic learning and performance.

The harms that occur are not due to irresponsibility but are rather a result of intentional digital design features and use of personal data by tech companies. The data collected by tech companies shapes the interaction children have online and is used to monetize children's attention. Common practices nudge children into riskier behavior, expose them to predators, recommend harmful material, and encourage compulsive behavior.

Again, MSCA supports HB 1119 as it will contribute to a framework that addresses the harmful effects of algorithmic addiction (especially on Maryland's youth), address mental and physical health issues caused by algorithmic addiction, and prevent further harm. We ask the Committee for a **favorable report**.

If we can provide any additional information, please contact Jocelyn I. Collins at [jcollins@policypartners.net](mailto:jcollins@policypartners.net).