

March 28, 2023
Board Meeting
Jefferson County Board of Education

Resolution Authorizing Litigation Against Social Media Companies

Whereas, more than 90% of youth today use social media, primarily YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook;

Whereas, excessive and problematic use of social media is harmful to the mental, behavioral, and emotional health of youth and is associated with increased rates of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, eating disorders, and suicide;

Whereas, social media companies have designed their platforms to maximize the time youth spend using them and addict youth to their platforms;

Whereas, last year, almost 50 percent of teenagers in the state spent between one and three hours a day on social media and 30 percent averaged more than three hours a day;

Whereas, many children are burdened by mental health challenges, and young people everywhere face unprecedented, learning and life struggles that are amplified by the negative impacts of increased screen time, unfiltered content, and potentially addictive properties of social media;

Whereas, social media companies have made choices to target youth, to maximize the time youth spend on social media platforms, and then designed their algorithms to feed children harmful content, like videos promoting eating disorders, violence, self-harm, and suicide.

Whereas, social media companies' actions related to their social media platforms are substantially contributing to the mental health crisis America's youth are facing. The harms allegedly caused by these companies include, but are not limited to, intentionally designing, marketing, and operating their exploitive social media platforms to be extremely popular with youth users, despite research confirming the severe and wide-ranging effects of social media on youth mental health;

Whereas, research has shown that excessive and problematic use of social media is harmful to the mental, behavioral, and emotional health of youth and is associated with increased rates of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, eating disorders, and suicide;

Whereas, Social media's business models are based upon maximizing the time users spend on their platforms. Defendants have designed their platforms so that users constantly feel the need to be on it:

Whereas, School Districts' first and greatest priority is the health and well-being of the students, and this includes the social and emotional harm that they suffer because of the negative impacts of social media;

Whereas, Public Schools have been significantly impacted by the resulting crisis from overexposure to social media because school districts are one of the main providers of mental health services for school-aged children in the community;

Whereas JCPS and its employees spend a significant amount of time and resources addressing students' mental health issues;

Whereas, JCPS and its employees spend a significant amount of time and resources providing counseling and educational services to students related to the harms caused by social media;

Whereas, JCPS believes it is entitled to compensation for its efforts and resources expended to address and treat the mental health issues caused by social media;

Whereas, JCPS desires to reduce the negative impact of social media on the mental health of students;

Whereas, the Jefferson County Board of Education has determined that it has the responsibility to protect its students and take legal action against these social media companies;

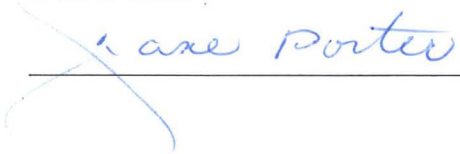
Whereas, social media can be, and has been a useful tool for communication utilized by school districts, sadly, the social media companies have developed algorithms to drive children to content that is not appropriate and causes psychological harm;

Whereas, the purpose of this action is not to end social media, but to return it to its useful and safe purposes.

NOW, therefore, be it resolved by the Jefferson County Board of Education that it authorizes attorney Ronald Johnson, and his law firm, Hendy Johnson Vaughn & Emery of Louisville, Kentucky to file a civil action against any appropriate parties to compensate Jefferson County Public Schools for damages suffered by Jefferson County Public Schools, and its students, as a result of social media's targeting students, to maximize the time youth spend on Defendants' social media platforms, and then designed their algorithms to feed children harmful content, like videos promoting eating disorders, violence, self-harm, and suicide, and to seek any other appropriate relief, including injunctive relief. The Jefferson County Board of Education further authorizes the superintendent to sign all necessary contracts and other related documents on behalf of Jefferson County Public Schools in the pursuit of any civil action.

Adopted on March 28, 2023 by the Jefferson County Board of Education.

Board Chair



Superintendent