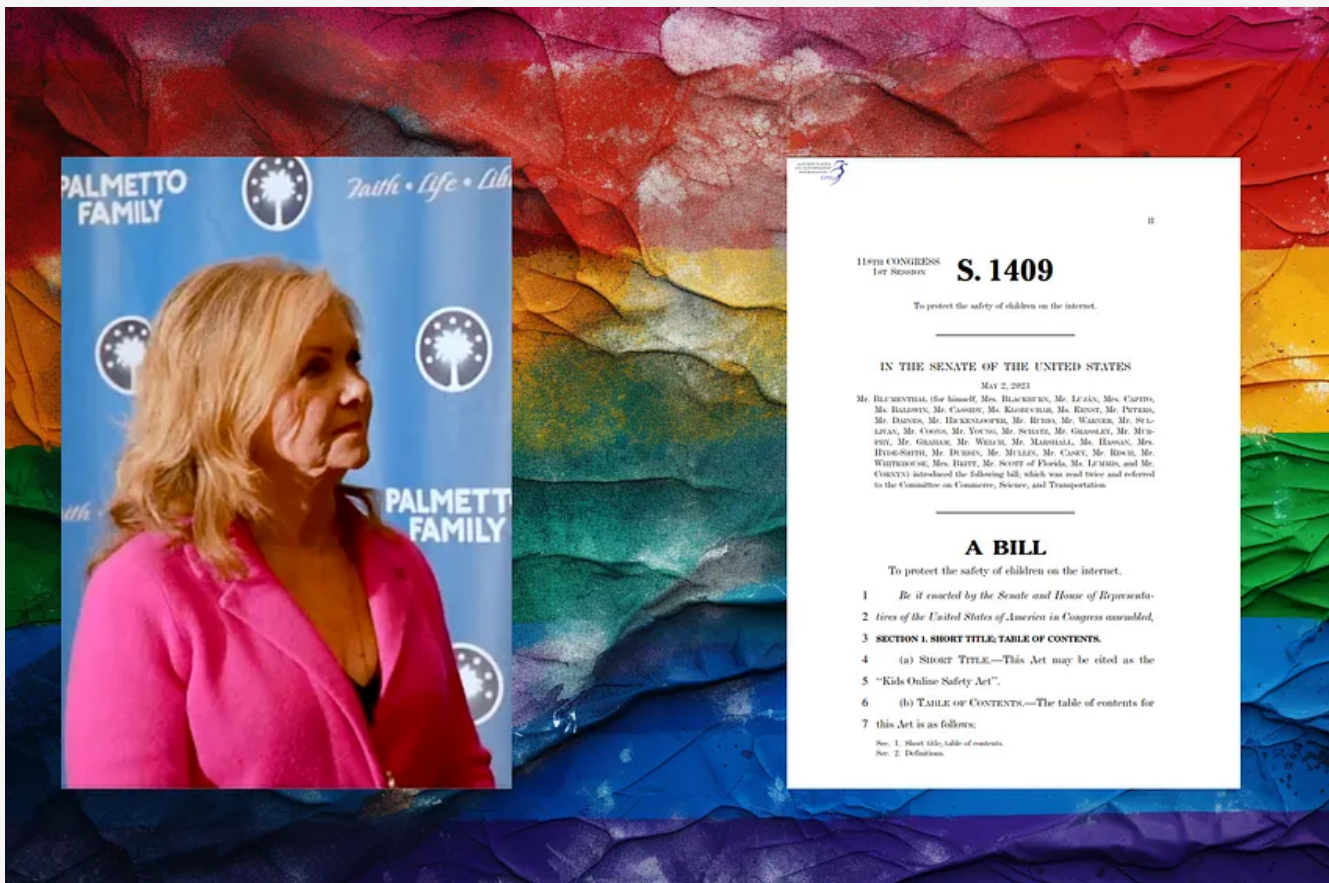
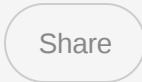
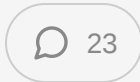


Senator Admits "Kids Online Safety Act" Will Target Trans Content Online

The lead sponsor of the "Kids Online Safety Act," otherwise known as KOSA, has stated over the weekend that it will be used to "protect minor children from the transgender in our culture."



ERIN REED
SEP 3, 2023



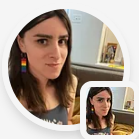
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A bill with bipartisan backing is quietly making its way through Congress, and it could pose a significant threat to LGBTQ+ content online. Officially named the **Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA)**, the legislation ostensibly aims to limit minors' access to social media, control the content they see, and enhance privacy and parental supervision features on

social media
advertisements
content
state
manipulation
alarms
be



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against transgender

individuals in the U.S. this year. While many aspects of KOSA are commendable—such as incentivizing social media platforms to curb compulsive usage among minors and bolstering privacy protections—certain elements are ripe for exploitation against transgender content.

The section raising the most eyebrows is dubbed the "duty of care." According to the bill, social media companies are required to implement measures to prevent and mitigate issues like "anxiety, depression, eating disorders, substance use disorders, and suicidal behaviors." Here's a closer look at this section:

18 **SEC. 3. DUTY OF CARE.**

19 (a) PREVENTION OF HARM TO MINORS.—A covered
20 platform shall act in the best interests of a user that the
21 platform knows or reasonably should know is a minor by
22 taking reasonable measures in its design and operation of
23 products and services to prevent and mitigate the fol-
24 lowing:

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7

1 (1) Consistent with evidence-informed medical
2 information, the following mental health disorders:
3 anxiety, depression, eating disorders, substance use
4 disorders, and suicidal behaviors.

Duty of care section of KOSA.

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Although transition has been proven to improve mental health among transgender people and reduce the risk of suicide, Republicans in state legislatures across the United States this year have issued faulty arguments that being transgender “**harms minors**

mental health” and that exposure to transgender content and people is dangerous. Later, the bill empowers state attorneys general to file suit to force compliance with the bill.

For those who have been monitoring the actions of state attorneys general in states with anti-transgender agendas this year, the potential weaponization of such legislation against transgender people is abundantly clear. In 2022, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton made headlines by **issuing a directive** to investigate all parents of transgender youth for child abuse, an action that nearly resulted in these children being removed from their families. Fortunately, the courts blocked this directive. This year, Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey **criminalized access** to healthcare for transgender minors and many adults by decree, though many parts were blocked by the courts there as well. Recently, seven state attorneys general **co-signed a letter** arguing that LGBTQ+ merchandise could be classified as obscene and detrimental to minors. In Montana, a **bill was nearly amended** to ban “acts of transgenderism” on the internet as harmful to minors. Given this context, it's easy to foresee how they might wield the new bill to target transgender content online.

This is not purely a matter of speculation. Anti-LGBTQ+ organizations have explicitly stated their intentions regarding the bill. For example, in **an article titled** "How Big Tech Turns Kids Trans," the Heritage Foundation voiced its support for the legislation. When advocates highlighted that this right-wing organization, already a staunch supporter of KOSA, advocated for using the bill in this manner, the Heritage Foundation doubled down. **They stated**, "Keeping trans content away from children is protecting kids. No child should be conditioned to think that permanently damaging their healthy bodies to try to become something they can never be is even remotely a good idea."

In perhaps the clearest example of red flags against this law, one of the biggest sponsors of the bill, Senator Marsha Blackburn, **stated that the bill** would be used to “protect minor children from the transgender [sic] in our culture.”

See her quote here:



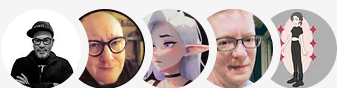
Even without targeted measures, the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA) could have severely detrimental consequences for LGBTQ+ online content. Social media platforms are already known for self-censoring such content. [Reports from GLAAD](#) indicate that LGBTQ+ material often faces demonetization, removal, or shadow-banning. Further complicating the issue, some content moderators work in social or cultural contexts where LGBTQ+ activities are either illegal or socially stigmatized. This situation frequently leads to insufficient training, resulting in the unwarranted suppression of legitimate LGBTQ+ content. KOSA would institutionalize such practices, increasing the likelihood of such censorship. Given the risks of legal action from state attorneys general, platforms would likely engage in preemptive self-censorship of LGBTQ+ material.

Despite these alarming implications, opposition to KOSA has been surprisingly tepid, even among groups typically considered stalwart allies of the LGBTQ+ community. While several LGBTQ+ organizations [did sign a letter](#) opposing KOSA in 2022, opposition has largely waned since from these groups. Internal sources at multiple LGBTQ+ organizations have informed me that their stances have moved to organizational neutrality. Moreover, a [recent report from the LA Blade](#) disclosed that in private discussions with key stakeholders, significant LGBTQ+ organizations such as

GLAAD, GLSEN, and PFLAG have quietly withdrawn their opposition to the bill, citing "meaningful conversations from key allies."

Given the rare bipartisan backing it enjoys, along with President Biden's endorsement, KOSA warrants vigilant scrutiny. In an era where few legislative efforts garner cross-party support, the bill's broad appeal makes it particularly noteworthy. However, KOSA has also emerged as a troubling point of divergence, pitting LGBTQ+ activists against organizations meant to represent their interests, as well as Democratic officials who have otherwise been vocal critics of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation. This divide highlights the potential for a serious misstep by those who otherwise support transgender people and could result in significant harm for the community should it pass.

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Write a comment...



Célia Vytrac 9 hrs ago

We all already know that liberals are going to sell out underrepresented groups to be able to say they held hands across parties lines to "accomplish something great". They'll happily throw us under the bus if it gets them bonus points for reelection.

 LIKE (18)  REPLY ...

1 reply



Victoria Wright 8 hrs ago

I think this bill could be salvaged by adding more explicit language about what constitutes as 'harmful' and even more explicitly what does *not*. Then, if Republicans want to kill the bill for actually being helpful instead of a discriminatory tool, that's on them. I'm not sure coming out completely against it is the right move. The mental health crisis among youth as a whole is really reaching a fever pitch and companies like Meta are being WILDLY unethical about how they peddle their drug. This is one of those situations where everyone agrees that something needs to be done, but there are multiple bad actors running around.

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