



Parents Television and Media Council

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An Open Letter to California State Senator Anthony Portantino

September 16, 2022

Subject: Your Constituents – and Our Children – Demand an Explanation

Dear Senator Portantino:

Yesterday Governor Newsom announced that he has signed into law AB-2273 – the California Age-Appropriate Design Code Act – which would help to protect children’s online privacy.

While we applaud the Governor’s action to sign this important protective measure, the reality is that the Governor *also* should have been signing AB-2408 into law. But he couldn’t do that, because you appear singlehandedly to have killed that bipartisan legislation behind closed doors, without a vote, when the bill had received zero no votes from your colleagues, without requesting even a single amendment to the bill, within days of you attending an invitation-only Big Tech-sponsored event at an elite Napa Valley Winery.

As your constituents – our corporate headquarters are in your district – and on behalf of parents and children across California, we demand an explanation.

The bipartisan (and let me say that again, *bipartisan*) Social Media Platform Duty to Children Act was introduced as a remedy to the growing epidemic of teen suicide and depression. There is irrefutable science linking social media addiction to this epidemic, and there is irrefutable evidence that corporate entities have knowingly, willingly and wantonly engineered their social media platforms to be addictive. This legislative measure, Assembly Bill AB-2408, would have held those corporate entities legally to account for their actions.

[AB-2408](#) passed the state legislature by a vote of 51-0. The state senate judiciary committee then approved the measure 8-0. And then you singlehandedly chose *not* to allow the senate appropriations committee even to consider the bill.

You did not allow the bill to be read.

You did not allow the bill to be discussed.

You did not suggest any edits or amendments to the bill that you might feel were necessary in order to allow the measure to be considered.

You did not permit a vote.

You did nothing; and by *nothing*, we mean to say that you did *everything* that was needed to kill it. In the process, you ensured that children will continue to be harmed by social media giants who are knowingly making addicts of children.

Because our children are watching®

Thus far you have not offered even one single word to explain why you chose to do what you did. Senator, we respectfully and rightfully demand an explanation.

Perhaps you were pressured by other influential politicians in Sacramento to kill AB-2408. Perhaps killing AB-2408 a bargaining chip for some important compromise you made with one or more other politicians. Or perhaps there was some other reason why you did what you did. Whatever your reason, please tell us.

Regardless the reasoning for killing the measure, *the optics of your action border on deplorable.*

Your decision not to bring the legislation to the appropriations committee occurred just days after you were treated to a lavish "[technology policy summit](#)" held at a luxurious Napa Valley resort and spa that was ostensibly paid for by the same big-tech companies that wanted AB-2408 killed in the crib.

The nonprofit organization that "officially" hosted you at the resort, the Foundation for California's Technology and Innovation Economy, appears to be dubious at best. According to the [most recent available \(2019\) IRS Form 990](#) for the Foundation, its mission is "educating Californians about the vital role technology and innovation plays in the economic and civic success of our state."

Yet this nonprofit, whose stated mission is to "educate Californians," does not have a website. It has no social media presence. It has no phone number of its own, nor does it have a physical address of its own. (Both the phone number and street address are that of the Kaufman Legal Group, a Los Angeles-based law firm that services political causes.) This all seems wholly inconsistent with an organization that serves to "educate Californians."

In addition to the Foundation's suspicious business operation, its board of directors has been [tied directly to a Sacramento Assemblyman](#), Evan Low, who reportedly worked surreptitiously to kill AB-2408. The sources of the Foundation's funding are not disclosed; but the 990 states that it spent over 70% of its program service expenses on a "conference." And according to [media reports](#), you attended this year's conference, which was held just days before you chose to kill AB-2408.

So the optics are bad. *Really* bad.

But again, perhaps there is a good reason why you worked to ensure that AB-2408 never saw the light of your committee hearing room, this despite the fact that it received exactly zero 'no' votes in Sacramento; despite its bipartisan support; despite the scientific proof of harm to children that it would have helped to remedy; and despite the evidence that big tech has acted knowingly with disregard to that harm.

We look forward to your explanation, and we do demand an explanation.

Sincerely,



Timothy F. Winter
President