



**Testimony in Support of the Stop the Harms from Addictive Social Media Act (H.F. 4138 (Scott))**  
**House Ways and Means Committee**

April 22, 2026

Chair Frazier, Chair Torkelson, and Members of the Committee:

The Minnesota Catholic Conference, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Minnesota, writes to express our support for H.F. 4138, the Stop the Harms from Addictive Social Media Act. Please vote yes.

Social media platforms are designed to addict users, and it works. Children spend nearly 20 percent of their day on social media.<sup>1</sup> The Minnesota Student Survey revealed that one in five students spends time online five nights a week between the hours of 12am and 5am.<sup>2</sup> And 97 percent of students report using their phones during the school day.<sup>3</sup>

Child brains are still developing, which makes them more vulnerable to falling into this addictive behavior. Social media algorithms coupled with age estimation technology are designed to understand what a user wants to see, and to push additional, related content towards that user. This can cause young people to spend more time online than they may wish, or to get pushed content that they would otherwise not have searched out. In Finland, they call this approach “algorithmic grooming.”

Instead of allowing the social media platforms to keep users online regardless of the cost, we can ask them to use the technology they already employ to keep children safe. They can eliminate the most addictive features on child accounts such as targeted advertising, infinite scrolling, and autoplay videos. In addition, they can require parental consent for youth under 16. If, by using their age estimation technology, they suspect a user is a child who did not achieve parental consent, the platform can boot the user off until consent is achieved.

These companies have the ability to keep children safe online rather than ushering them towards a childhood of addiction and online social pressures.

Protecting youth online is one step in a three-tiered approach that the Minnesota Catholic Conference has proposed to help keep children safe.<sup>4</sup> Studies have shown that when social media usage is limited, depression and anxiety go down, and people report higher rates of happiness.<sup>5</sup>

Minnesota has an opportunity to create impactful and life-altering changes for our state’s youth by passing H.F. 4138 and adding needed guardrails to online usage. Nearly half of teens say that social media has a mostly negative effect on people their age.<sup>6</sup> But given the addictive quality of these platforms and the social pressures that come with it, unplugging can feel nearly impossible. Let’s help solve the problem that teens themselves agree exists.

Please pass H.F. 4138. Thank you for your consideration.

Maggee Hangge  
Assistant Director for Family Policy

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<sup>1</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/512576/teens-spend-average-hours-social-media-per-day.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/mchs/surveys/mss/docs/staterwidetables/statewidebygrade.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.common sense media.org/sites/default/files/research/report/2023-cs-smartphone-research-report\\_final-for-web.pdf](https://www.common sense media.org/sites/default/files/research/report/2023-cs-smartphone-research-report_final-for-web.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.mncatholic.org/protectchildren>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/sg-youth-mental-health-social-media-advisory.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2025/04/22/teens-social-media-and-mental-health/>



April 21, 2026

**MN House Ways & Means Committee**

Minnesota House of Representatives

Centennial Office Building

658 Cedar Street

St. Paul, MN 55155

**Re: Support for HF4138**

Dear Chair and Members of the Ways & Means Committee:

On behalf of WithAll, we write in strong support of HF4138.

WithAll is a Minnesota-based national nonprofit working to prevent and end eating disorders. We do this by bring evidence-based expertise from universities and treatment programs to “Main Street,” so that adults know how to support young people’s wellbeing around body image and food—stopping eating disorders before they start. This protects childhoods and saves lives.

Traditional media has long shaped self-perception by promoting narrow body ideals through celebrities, actors, and models, often encouraging harmful comparison and contributing to body dissatisfaction and eating disorders.[1] Today, social media intensifies those same pressures in scale and force.

Young people are especially vulnerable. Social media platforms are designed to capture and hold attention, and adolescents are particularly susceptible to compulsive patterns of use.[2] Half of U.S. teens spend more than four hours a day on social media,[3] increasing their exposure to harmful content and repeated appearance-based comparison.

The evidence is clear that social media can harm young people’s mental health, including worsening body image, increasing eating disorder risk, and reinforcing harmful beliefs and behaviors related to body and food.[4] These risks are especially concerning for children under 16.

HF4138 is an important and reasonable response. It would:

1. Require parental or guardian permission for children under 16 to create a social media account.
2. Prohibit the most addictive platform features on child accounts, including auto-play video, targeted advertising, and infinite scroll.

This bill gives families stronger tools to protect children during a particularly vulnerable stage of development. For these reasons, **we respectfully urge your support for HF4138.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Radzak".

Lisa Radzak

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Citations:**

[1] Paediatr Child Health 2003 May-Jun;8(5):287–289. doi: [10.1093/pch/8.5.287](https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/8.5.287)

[2] Shapka JD. Adolescent technology engagement: It is more complicated than a lack of self-control. Hum Behav & Emerg Tech. 2019;1:103110. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.144>

[3] Gallup Poll, October 13, 2023 [Teens Spend Average of 4.8 Hours on Social Media Per Day](https://www.gallup.com)

[4] Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2021 Mar 11;18(6):2880. doi: [10.3390/ijerph18062880](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18062880) *Social Media Use and Body Image Disorders: Association between Frequency of Comparing One's Own Physical Appearance to That of People Being Followed on Social Media and Body Dissatisfaction and Drive for Thinness*; J Psychiatry Psychiatr Disord. 2025 Apr 16;9(2):111–130. *The Impact of Social Media & Technology on Child and Adolescent Mental Health*

## Testimony in Support of HF 4138 (MIAC & DIW)

Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC)

Division of Indian Work (DIW)

The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC), in partnership with the Division of Indian Work (DIW), supports HF 4138 and appreciates the Legislature's work to strengthen protections for youth online. Addressing the impacts of social media on young people is an important and timely issue.

From our perspective, this bill takes meaningful steps by placing responsibility on platforms and creating safeguards intended to reduce harmful and addictive online experiences for minors.

We also want to highlight how this issue intersects with Tribal communities.

Native youth experience disproportionately high rates of mental health challenges, including elevated rates of depression and suicide compared to their peers. At the same time, for many Native youth, particularly in rural and Tribal communities, online spaces are an important way to stay connected to peers, access resources, and maintain a sense of community.

Because of that, we see value in both:

- strengthening protections from harmful and addictive platform design, and
- ensuring continued access to supportive digital spaces, alongside investments in community-based opportunities where youth can connect in person

We also want to note that this bill is content-neutral and does not focus on restricting speech, but rather on addressing features designed to drive excessive use and

engagement. That distinction is important, particularly for youth who rely on digital spaces for connection and support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.