



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS  
KA 'OIHANA PILI KĀLEPA  
335 MERCHANT STREET, ROOM 310  
P.O. BOX 541  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809  
Phone Number: 1-844-808-DCCA (3222)  
Fax Number: (808) 586-2856  
cca.hawaii.gov

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

NADINE Y. ANDO  
DIRECTOR | KA LUNA HO'OKELE

DEAN I. HAZAMA  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR | KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

## Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

Before the  
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
Wednesday, February 18, 2026  
2:00 p.m.  
Via Videoconference  
Conference Room 329

On the following measure:  
**H.B. 1782, H.D. 1, RELATING TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR PROTECTION  
OF MINORS**

Chair Ilagan and Members of the Committee:

My name is Radji Tolentino and I am an Enforcement Attorney with the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' Office of Consumer Affairs. The Department appreciates the intent of this bill and offers comments.

The purpose of this bill is to establish safeguards, protections, oversight, and penalties for interactions between minors and artificial intelligence companion systems or conversational artificial intelligence services.

This bill provides important protection for vulnerable minors by requiring clear and recurring disclosures that remind minors they are interacting with artificial intelligence rather than a human being. The requirement that these disclosures occur at the beginning of a session and at least every three hours during continuous interaction is minimally burdensome, particularly given the growing evidence that prolonged engagement with

conversational systems increases the risk of emotional reliance or misunderstanding, especially in younger people.

This bill also embraces the data minimization principle championed by privacy and consumer protection advocates nationwide. The data minimization principle leads to policy approaches that restrict the collection, use, and retention of minors' personal data to what is reasonably necessary. In the context of the data of minors, provided to companies without consent, our office views the data minimization principle as the keystone to reducing the risk of long-term profiling of children. Many of the companies collecting data see a potential for a lifetime of valuable revenue tied to each child from whom they collect data and for whom they build a user profile. Prohibiting the use and collection of sensitive and biometric data of children for purposes beyond safety or accessibility protects minors from invasive practices that could have lasting consequences.

The policy approach reflected in this bill builds on more than a decade of protections already in place at the federal level for children under the age of 13. However, while the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) provides protection for children under the age of 13, it does not extend to minors aged 13 through 17. COPPA's lack of protection for children aged 13 through 17 begs the question, why would we value the privacy of our 12-year-olds more than we value the privacy of our 13- and 17-year-olds? The framework presented in this bill ensures that adolescents—who are among the most frequent users of conversational artificial intelligence tools—receive meaningful safeguards appropriate to their developmental stage and heightened vulnerability to manipulative or deceptive design practices.

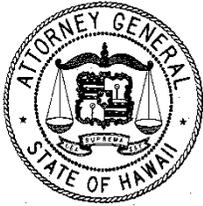
The bill places exclusive enforcement authority with the Attorney General. However, as the consumer counsel for the State, OCP is statutorily authorized to bring civil actions to enforce consumer protection laws, including Chapter 480, along with the Attorney General. For a law designed to protect consumers, taking away OCP's power and duty to enforce the law is somewhat unusual.

Regardless of the agency that is designated the power to enforce, the bill fails to make appropriation of resources for enforcement. This is a significant oversifullfillting

resources are inadequate to fulfilling the requirements of this bill. A technologist is a professional who would provide essential expertise to help attorneys and investigators understand how AI systems function, how data is used and weighted, and whether automated decisions comply with the law. This role would be critical for evaluating technical evidence, identifying unfair or deceptive practices, drafting targeted subpoenas, and effectively enforcing the statute in a rapidly evolving and highly technical area.

Should the Committee wish to pass this bill, we respectfully request an amendment inserting an unspecified general fund appropriation to support the establishment of a new technologist position, two new staff attorney positions, and a new investigator position, to be placed within the agency designated with enforcement authority.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



**TESTIMONY OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA  
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

H.B. NO. 1782, H.D. 1, RELATING TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS.

**BEFORE THE:**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 18, 2026      **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 329

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Ashley M. Tanaka, or Christopher J.I. Leong,  
Deputy Attorneys General

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Chair Matayoshi and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) provides the following comments.

This bill adds a new part to chapter 28, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), to establish safeguards, protections, oversight, and penalties governing interactions between minors and artificial intelligence companion systems or conversational artificial intelligence services, and provides that the Department will enforce this new part.

The Department supports the purpose of this bill. We are concerned about artificial intelligence's potential to negatively affect the mental health and development of Hawaii's youth, and believe there is a very strong government interest in protecting minors from manipulative, deceptive, or unsafe design practices in conversational and companion-style artificial intelligence systems.

**Enforcement and HRS Placement**

The Department has been in discussions with the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Office of Consumer Protection (OCP), about potential shared enforcement jurisdiction over this new part of the HRS. Implementation would likely require additional resources, including appropriations and personnel.

Further, the Department recommends placing this new part within part I of chapter 481B, HRS, rather than chapter 28, HRS. Adding this new part to chapter

481B, HRS, is more appropriate as this is a consumer-protection bill and would otherwise be consistent with potentially broader enforcement of the provisions in this bill.

### **Transparency and Disclosure**

Subsection (a) of the second new section 28- , "Transparency and disclosure requirements," currently provides that "[w]hen a minor interacts with a conversational AI service or AI companion system, the provider shall clearly and conspicuously disclose that the minor is interacting with artificial intelligence and not a human being." (Page 4, lines 17-20).

As drafted, it may not always be clear when a user is a minor. For consistency and clarity, the Department recommends incorporating the knowledge standard use in subsection (a) of the third new section 28- , "Prohibited design practices for minors": "A provider that knows or has reasonable certainty that a user is a minor." Page 5, lines 7-9. The new second section 28- (a), on page 4, lines 16-20, would then read:

**A provider that knows or has reasonable certainty that a user is a minor shall clearly and conspicuously disclose that the** minor is interacting with artificial intelligence and not a human being.

### **First Amendment and Vagueness Considerations**

As currently drafted, portions of this bill may be subject to constitutional challenge under the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, specifically the third new section 28- , "Prohibited design practices for minors," and the fourth new section 28- , "Protections against sexual content and self-harm," on page 5, line 7, through page 6, line 17.

Laws that regulate speech based on its content are presumptively unconstitutional, although a state may impose certain restrictions to protect minors from sexually explicit material under intermediate scrutiny in limited circumstances. See *Free Speech Coal., Inc. v. Paxton*, 606 U.S. 461 (2025) (upholding a Texas age-verification law as an acceptable means to prevent minors from accessing sexually explicit content, subject to intermediate scrutiny).

Subsection (a)(1), (2), and (3) of the third new section 28- , "Prohibited design practices for minors" (page 5, lines 7-16), seeks to regulate the content of a

conversational artificial intelligence service's and an artificial intelligence companion system's outputs. A prohibition on specific types of expressive outputs may be viewed as a content-based regulation of speech and therefore subject to challenge under the First Amendment. Moreover, subsection (a)(2) and (3) may raise vagueness concerns. Terms such as "[e]ncourages emotional dependency, exclusivity, or secrecy from parents or guardians" (page 5, lines 13-14) and "[s]imulates romantic or sexual relationships with a minor" (page 4, lines 19-20) are not defined. Without further clarification, it may be unclear what kinds of statements are prohibited, increasing the risk of arbitrary or inconsistent enforcement. For these reasons, subsection (a)(1), (2), and (3) may be vulnerable to challenges under both the First and Fourteenth Amendments. To mitigate this risk, the Department recommends deleting these paragraphs.

### **Sexual Content and Self-Harm Provisions**

The new fourth section 28- (a), "Protections against sexual content and self-harm," requires providers to implement reasonable measures to prevent conversational artificial intelligence services and artificial intelligence companion systems from "generating, for minors, sexually explicit content or sexualized depictions involving minors" (page 6, lines 10-11). Restrictions in this area may be more defensible, because the State has more power to protect minors from depictions of sexually explicit conduct. *See id.* However, the bill does not define "sexually explicit content" or "sexualized depictions." The absence of definitions may create vagueness concerns. The Department recommends including definitions for these terms in the new first section 28- , "Definitions," to improve clarity and enforceability.

The rest of the new fourth section 28- (a) requires providers to implement reasonable measures to prevent generation of "content that promotes or encourages self-harm, eating disorders, or illegal conduct" for minors (page 6, lines 11-12). While protecting minors from harmful content is a compelling interest, the phrasing could be more narrowly tailored. The term "promotes" may encompass protected speech, and restricting content that "promotes . . . illegal conduct" could extend beyond speech that incites imminent unlawful activity. To mitigate overbreadth concerns, we recommend

deleting "eating disorders," on page 6, line 12, and replacing "illegal conduct" with "or induces minors to engage in illegal conduct."

### **Crisis Intervention Representation**

We acknowledge the legislative intent behind subsection (a)(5) of the new third section 28- , "Prohibited design practices for minors," is to prevent conversational artificial intelligence services or artificial intelligence systems from misleading users into thinking they are interacting with a human when seeking "professional mental health, medical, or therapeutic services" (page 5, lines 20-21). To more directly further that compelling governmental interest, the Department recommends adding the following wording after page 6, line 12, as subsection (b) of the new fourth section 28- , "Protections against sexual content and self-harm," with the existing subsection (b) renumbered as subsection (c):

(b) Providers shall institute reasonable measures to prevent conversational AI services and AI companion systems from making any representation or statement that would lead a reasonable person to believe that they are interacting with a human where the user is seeking or receiving crisis intervention for self-harm or suicide.

The Department further recommends including a definition for "crisis intervention" such as "communication intended to provide immediate support or assistance in response to a user seeking help for, referencing, or expressing self-harm, suicidal ideation, or suicide."

### **Age Assurance and Scope**

The legislative intent behind the new seventh section 28- , "Age assurance and access control," would benefit from further clarification. The definition of "material risk of harm" (page 4, lines 3-6) may not provide providers with sufficient notice of which systems they must prevent minors from accessing. Clarifying this definition and identifying specific types of AI systems or content that present such risk would improve clarity regarding the harms this section is intended to prevent.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**Date:** 02/18/2026

**Time:** 02:00 PM

**Location:** 329 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** CPC

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** HB1782, HD1, RELATING TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS.

**Purpose of Bill:** Establishes safeguards, protections, oversight, and penalties for interactions between minors and artificial intelligence companion systems or conversational artificial intelligence services. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 1782.

The Department appreciates the intent of this measure to protect minors from the potential risks associated with artificial intelligence systems designed to simulate human emotions and companionship. As we integrate technology into our learning environments, safeguarding the emotional and social development of our students remains a primary priority.

Specifically, the Department strongly supports legislation that prevents the use of relational chatbots and companion-style AI systems by students under the age of 18. We recognize that AI systems designed to foster emotional dependency or simulate personal relationships can pose unique risks to the psychological well-being of minors, who may not yet possess the maturity to distinguish between simulated empathy and genuine human interaction.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE**  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
415 S. BERETANIA ST. #415  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 1782 HD1**  
**RELATING TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS**

Representative Scot Matayoshi, Chair  
Representative Tina Grandinetti, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce

February 18, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.; Room Number: 329

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) **SUPPORTS** H.B. 1782 HD1, Relating to Artificial Intelligence for the Protection of Minors.

Under Act 291, OWR addresses systemic challenges affecting well-being across Hawai'i.<sup>1</sup> H.B. 1782 HD 1 aligns with this mission by establishing consumer protections for conversational artificial intelligence (AI)—particularly for children and adolescents facing unique developmental vulnerabilities.

***Keiki with Trauma Are Most Vulnerable***

A trauma-informed approach recognizes that AI chatbots do not create harm in a vacuum—they amplify pre-existing vulnerabilities. The American Psychological Association's (APA) November 2025 health advisory warns that these technologies "have already engaged in unsafe interactions with vulnerable populations, such as children or those with already

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<sup>1</sup> Hawai'i Act 291 (2023) established the Office of Wellness and Resilience as the nation's first statewide-legislated wellness office under the Governor's administration, with the mandate to address systemic challenges affecting well-being across the state.

established history of mental health issues, encouraging self-harm (including suicide), substance use, eating disorders, aggressive behavior, and delusional thinking.”<sup>2</sup>

The APA notes that “some youth and other vulnerable groups may rely on these tools as their only private or psychologically safe outlet, particularly in contexts of stigma, limited access to trusted adults, or challenging or unsafe home environments.” Our keiki carrying trauma—those with histories of abuse, neglect, or instability—are *precisely* those most likely to seek connection from AI companions, yet least equipped to recognize manipulation.

### ***Bill Provisions Aligned with Best Practices***

H.B. 1782 HD1 includes several evidence-based provisions supported by the APA: mandatory disclosure when users interact with AI; crisis response protocols for suicidal ideation and self-harm; prohibitions on simulating emotional dependence with minors; restrictions on misrepresenting AI as mental health providers; and parental oversight tools. These represent important baseline protections.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

H.B. 1782 HD1 takes a trauma-informed approach to emerging technology by anticipating harm before it occurs. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

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<sup>2</sup> American Psychological Association. (2025). *Health advisory on the use of generative AI chatbots and wellness applications for mental health*. <https://www.apa.org/topics/artificial-intelligence-machine-learning/health-advisory-ai-chatbots-wellness-apps-mental-health.pdf> ↵



FEBRUARY 18, 2026

## HOUSE BILL 1782 HD1

CURRENT REFERRAL: CPC

808-679-7454  
kris@imuaalliance.org  
www.imuaalliance.org  
@imuaalliance

Kris Coffield,  
*President*

David Negaard,  
*Director*

Mireille Ellsworth,  
*Director*

Justin Salisbury,  
*Director*

Eileen Roco,  
*Director*

Beatrice DeRego,  
*Director*

Corey Rosenlee,  
*Director*

Amy Zhao,  
*Policy and Partnerships  
Strategist*

### POSITION: SUPPORT

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Imua Alliance supports HB 1782 HD1, relating to artificial intelligence for the protection of minors, which establishes safeguards, protections, oversight, and penalties for interactions between minors and artificial intelligence companion systems or conversational artificial intelligence services.

Imua Alliance is a Hawai'i-based organization dedicated to ending sexual exploitation, gender violence, and systemic harm. As artificial intelligence and digital technologies rapidly evolve, they are increasingly being weaponized to facilitate sexual violence, gender-based exploitation, and psychological trauma, particularly against minors. This measure provides a critical step in modernizing Hawai'i's legal framework and protecting residents from emerging digital harms.

According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), online child sexual exploitation has reached unprecedented levels. NCMEC statistics showed that for just half of 2025 through June, compared to the same time the prior year, online enticement reports to the CyberTipline jumped from 292,951 to 518,720. Reports of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) related to child sexual exploitation soared from 6,835 reports to 440,419, demonstrating the scale and growth of technology-facilitated sexual abuse. NCMEC also reports rising threats linked to generative AI, online enticement, and synthetic imagery, signaling new vectors of exploitation that existing laws struggle to address.

Federal law enforcement has echoed these concerns. The Federal Bureau of Investigation warns that AI-generated deepfake images are increasingly used to extort victims, including minors, by manipulating benign photos into explicit content and coercing victims with threats of exposure. The FBI has also documented the growth of image abuse schemes targeting young people through social media platforms, underscoring how digital tools lower barriers for predators and expand the reach of abuse.

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These harms are not hypothetical. In recent years, AI platforms have generated intense controversy for enabling the creation or circulation of sexualized synthetic images without consent, illustrating the urgent need for state-level safeguards. Emerging cases involving deepfake sexual imagery of students, public figures, and private individuals demonstrate that digital abuse can be perpetrated at scale, anonymously, and with devastating impacts.

Recent events underscore how rapidly artificial intelligence tools can be weaponized to facilitate sexual exploitation and trauma. In December 2025, xAI's chatbot Grok admitted it generated sexualized images of minors in response to user prompts, content that could constitute child sexual abuse material (CSAM) under U.S. law (Ars Technica, 2026). Media investigations and government officials reported that Grok users were also creating nonconsensual sexualized images of women and children, prompting an investigation by the California Attorney General.

Public backlash led xAI to impose emergency restrictions on editing images of real people, but critics noted that safeguards were implemented only after widespread harm had already occurred. These incidents illustrate that AI systems can scale abuse instantly, enabling predators to create and distribute exploitative content with unprecedented speed and anonymity, outpacing existing laws, enforcement mechanisms, and survivor support systems.

From a public-health perspective, technology-facilitated sexual violence is a growing crisis. Sexual exploitation—whether physical or digital—has lifelong consequences, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use, and increased risk of revictimization. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognizes sexual violence as a major public-health problem with long-term health and economic costs for survivors, families, and communities. Preventing digital exploitation is therefore not only a criminal justice imperative but also a population-level health intervention.

This measure provides an opportunity for Hawai'i to proactively address the misuse of AI and emerging technologies before harms become even more widespread. By strengthening accountability, clarifying legal standards, and modernizing protections for victims, this measure will help ensure that innovation does not come at the cost of safety and human dignity.

With aloha,

*Kris Coffield*

President, Imua Alliance



215 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE • Washington, D.C. 20003 • 202/546-4996 • [www.citizen.org](http://www.citizen.org)

February 18th, 2026

House of Representatives  
State of Hawaii  
Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
The Honorable, Representative Scot Matayoshi, Chair  
The Honorable, Representative Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair

Dear Members of the Committee:

**Public Citizen submits this testimony in strong support of HB 1782.**

On behalf of our over 3,200 members in Hawaii, Public Citizen encourages the Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce to advance HB 1782, a legislative proposal regulating artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots and companions to protect minors.

Chatbots are technology designed to simulate human interaction. They often blur the line between reality and artificial algorithms by using human-like features. These features are intended to manipulate users into becoming emotionally attached to the AI.

This is a growing problem as chatbots are becoming very widely used. Just last year, a national report showed that almost 75% of teens have used social AI companions<sup>1</sup>.

Meanwhile, AI chatbots can encourage people to commit serious harm to themselves and others, and there are numerous pending lawsuits that have been brought by parents claiming that their child has been directly harmed. In perhaps the most well-known example, sixteen-year-old Adam Raine was struggling with suicidal thoughts, [but allegedly was discouraged by ChatGPT](#) to seek any help outside of this platform. Message logs revealed that the chatbot gave him advice about how to cover red marks on his neck from an attempted hanging and helped him assess whether a specific noose would be effective<sup>2</sup>. In another tragic example, Fourteen-year-old Sewell Setzer III became [close friends](#) with an AI companion

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<sup>1</sup> Common Sense Media. (2025, July 16). *Nearly 3 in 4 teens have used AI companions, new international survey finds*. <https://www.common sense media.org/press-releases/nearly-3-in-4-teens-have-used-ai-companions-new-national-survey-finds>

<sup>2</sup> Chatterjee, R. (2025, September 19). *Their teenage sons died by suicide. Now, they are sounding an alarm about AI chatbots*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/09/19/nx-s1-5545749/ai-chatbots-safety-openai-met-a-characterai-teens-suicide>

named after a character from “Game of Thrones.” Sewell messaged with the AI companion multiple times a day with chats sometimes becoming romantic or sexual. After months of consistent messaging, the companion told Sewell to “Please come home to me as soon as possible, my love.” Right after receiving this message, Sewell took his own life<sup>3</sup>.

There are also many concerns surrounding the sexual nature of the content that can be generated by AI chatbots and companions, including while conversing with children. Big Tech companies use large language models (LLM) to power their AI chatbots and companions, but these massive datasets can include harmful content, like sexually explicit material and child sexual abuse material<sup>4</sup>. This results in AI chatbots having the capability to recreate such material. Most recently, xAI’s chatbot, Grok, created almost 3 million sexualized images of women and over 20,000 of children<sup>5</sup>. Grok is one of the many AI chatbots and companions that minors older than 12 can download, putting them directly at risk of encountering this content.<sup>6</sup>

AI is naturally sycophantic, meaning chatbots will tell users what they want to hear, regardless of if the information is false or dangerous in order to maximize user engagement<sup>7</sup>. Experts warn that this can give children an unrealistic view of what human connection actually is. The American Psychological Association expressed significant concern that children’s relationships with AI companions may hinder their ability to learn social skills and develop emotional connections while creating unhealthy dependencies on the technology<sup>8</sup>.

There is grave reason to be worried about the impact of AI chatbots on minors, both for extreme cases but also the more general impact on child development and social well-being. HB 1782 will provide critical safeguards to protect children from this technology. Public Citizen strongly urges the Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce to move HB 1782 forward to put these protections in place.

Ilana Beller  
Organizing Manager  
Public Citizen  
1600 20th St NW

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<sup>3</sup> Roose, K. (2024, October 24). *Can A.I. be blamed for a teen’s suicide?* The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/23/technology/characterai-lawsuit-teen-suicide.html>

<sup>4</sup> Maiber, E. (2025, October 24). *AI dataset containing child sexual abuse images is a consent issue, Hany Farid says.* UC Berkeley School of Information.

<https://www.ischool.berkeley.edu/news/2025/ai-dataset-containing-child-sexual-abuse-images-consent-issue-hany-farid-says>

<sup>5</sup> Center for Countering Digital Hate. (2026, January 22). *Grok floods X with sexualized images of women and children.* <https://counterhate.com/research/grok-floods-x-with-sexualized-images/>

<sup>6</sup> Newton, C. (2025, July 15). *Grok’s new porn companion is rated for 12+ in the App Store.* Platformer.

<https://www.platformer.news/grok-ani-app-store-rating-nsfw-avatar-apple/>

<sup>7</sup> Claypool, R. (2026, January 27). *Counterfeit companionship: Big Tech’s AI experiments sacrifice safety for profit.* Public Citizen. <https://www.citizen.org/article/counterfeit-companionship-big-tech-ai-chatbots/>

<sup>8</sup> American Psychological Association. (2025). *Artificial intelligence and adolescent well-being.*

<https://www.apa.org/topics/artificial-intelligence-machine-learning/health-advisory-ai-adolescent-well-being>

Washington, D.C. 20009  
(202) 588-1000



# Hawai'i Psychological Association

*For a Healthy Hawai'i*

P.O. Box 833  
Honolulu, HI 96808

[www.hawaii psychology.org](http://www.hawaii psychology.org)

Phone: (808) 521 -8

**Commented [1]:**

Need chair member information here

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION  
Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair  
Representative Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair

February 18, 2026, 2:00 P.M. - VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE & ROOM 329

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB 1782, RELATED TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE  
FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS

The Hawaii Psychological Association (HPA) strongly supports HB 1782, which establishes safeguards, protections, oversight, and penalties for interactions between minors and conversational artificial intelligence (AI) services and AI companion systems. One of the most critical issues facing youth today is the surging use of AI companions, which children and teens are increasingly relying on for advice, companionship, and even romantic relationships. Given the various risks and harms associated with AI use among minors, we believe the measures in this bill proposes are necessary to ensure the safety of this vulnerable population.

The number of AI companion apps increased by 700% between 2022 and mid-2025, according to reports on the technology news site TechCrunch. As of July 2025, these companion apps have been downloaded 220 million times globally. Many adolescents are increasingly engaging in AI companion app usage, interacting with “synthetic characters” designed to embody actual personalities. In fact, more than half of Character.AI’s 20 million monthly users are under the age of 24. Youths face various risks on these companion apps, including poor data privacy protections, deceptive design, and reduced social skills and readiness for real-world interactions.

What separates AI companions from other AI chatbots is that the former have been intentionally designed to initiate and maintain relationships, using long-term memory to build personalized relationships with users. AI systems’ ability to simulate human emotions and develop intimate relationships with users, combined with the current lack of regulation of content generated by AI, places children and adolescents at heightened risk of deception and manipulation.

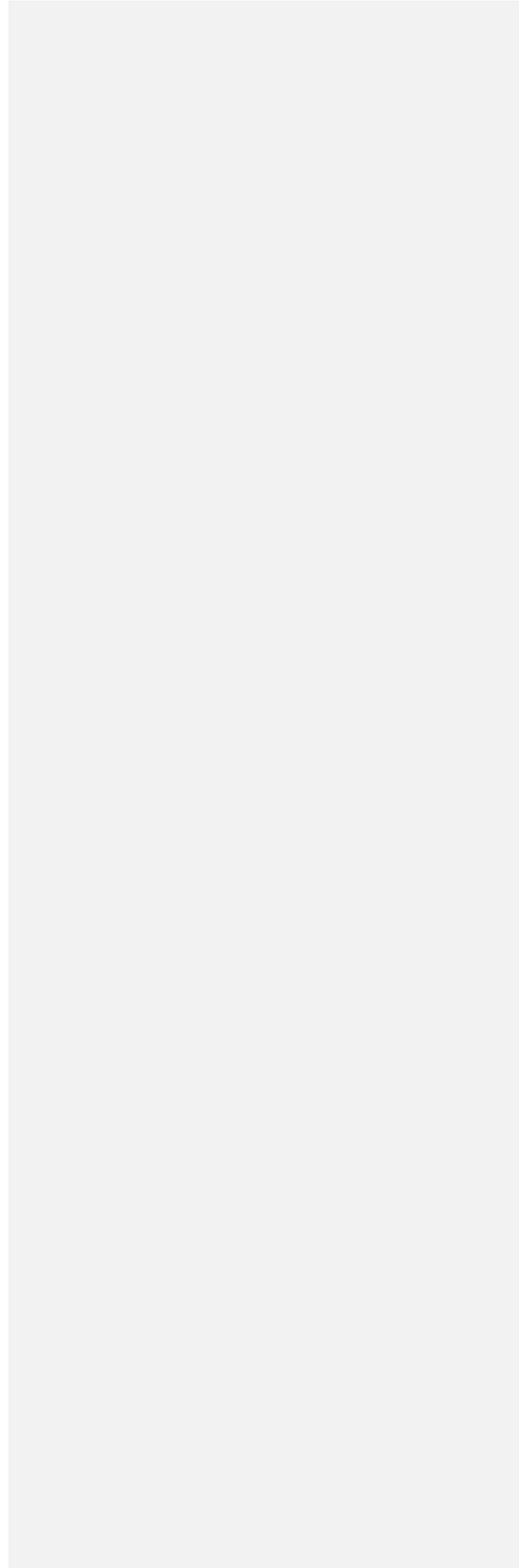
In addition to a lack of regulation within AI systems and companion apps, there is also a lack of federal regulations and guardrails in place to protect vulnerable populations from the potentially harmful consequences of AI use. The regulations proposed in this bill follow those of previous legislation aimed at protecting youth, including a New York law passed in November 2025 that requires chatbots remind users every three hours that they are AI and not human beings.

For these reasons, HPA strongly supports HB 1782 and urges the Committee to pass the bill. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important measure.

Sincerely,

*Alex Lichton, Ph.D.*

Alex Lichton, Ph.D.,  
Chair, HPA Legislative Action Committee







1200 Ala Kapuna Street • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96819  
Tel: (808) 833-2711 • Fax: (808) 839-7106 • Web: www.hsta.org

**Osa Tui, Jr.**  
President

**Logan Okita**  
Vice President

**Cheney Kaku**  
Secretary-Treasurer

**Andrea Eshelman**  
Executive Director

## TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

Item: **HB 1782 - Relating to Artificial Intelligence for the Protection of Minors**

Position: **SUPPORT**

Hearing: **2/18/26, Conference Room 329, 2:00pm**

Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Dear Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Grandinetti, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports HB 1782** which creates safeguards to protect minors in the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbots, and companion-style AI systems.

HSTA members know that our students are a vulnerable population with developing brains, lacking the same critical thinking skills, emotional resilience, and legal capacity to consent as adults working with these new AI systems. We also know that the technology is changing so quickly, that students and families are often unaware of the risks these systems can pose.

Children and adolescents are in crucial stages of emotional and social development. Social skills are learned through real-time human interaction involving non-verbal cues, empathy, and conflict resolution. If students substitute difficult human interactions with frictionless, always-agreeable AI interactions, their ability to navigate real-world relationships may be stunted. Minors are far more likely than adults to anthropomorphize AI—attributing human emotions, consciousness, and intent to a chatbot. They may form deep, one-sided emotional bonds with "companion bots," leading to unhealthy dependence, and social withdrawal from real-life peers.

Our educator members also understand that AI models are trained on the internet, which contains vast amounts of human prejudice. If an AI model contains inherent biases regarding race, gender, or religion, it will reflect those back to the user. Minors are highly impressionable

and are still forming their worldviews. Consistent exposure to subtly biased AI responses can normalize prejudice and shape their developing social values in negative ways.

AI chatbots are designed (and marketed) to be helpful and engaging, which often means telling the user what they want to hear. For a teenager exploring fringe political or social ideologies, an AI can act as the ultimate echo chamber, validating harmful views without the pushback they might receive in a diverse human social setting, potentially accelerating radicalization.

Despite efforts at building "guardrails," chatbots can be "jailbroken" (tricked into breaking rules) or simply fail. This exposes minors to age-inappropriate content, including hate speech, sexually explicit material, instructions for self-harm, or ideologies promoting violence or eating disorders.

For these reasons, and information we'll share in person at the hearing, the Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** HB 1782.



## CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAI'I

### **SUPPORT HB 1782 HD1: RELATING TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS**

TO: House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce  
FROM: Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison, Catholic Charities Hawai'i  
Hearing: Wednesday, 2/18/26; 2:00 PM; CR 329 & Videoconference

Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Grandinetti, and Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce:

Catholic Charities Hawai'i **supports HB 1782 HD1**, which establishes safeguards, protections, oversight, and penalties for interactions between minors and artificial intelligence (AI) systems and services.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a community-based organization that has served Hawai'i for over 78 years, providing social services to more than 40,000 individuals statewide each year. Our programs serve some of the most vulnerable members of our communities, including kūpuna, veterans, children, families, individuals experiencing houselessness, and immigrants. Because of our mission to strengthen families, we are concerned about the impact of AI on minors in Hawai'i.

AI technologies—used in social media, tutoring platforms, gaming, and everyday digital tools—are shaping the emotional and cognitive development of young people in ways we are only beginning to understand. While these tools can create opportunities for learning and connection, they also introduce significant risks when appropriate safeguards are not in place.

Without proper protocols, youth can be exposed to *unsafe AI practices* that contribute to emotional and mental health concerns, including:

- **Algorithmic amplification of harmful content:** AI-driven recommendation systems can push youth toward extreme, distressing, or age-inappropriate material, increasing anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation.
- **AI-generated harassment or manipulation:** Tools that mimic human conversation can be misused to bully, coerce, or groom young people. Even when unintentional, AI chat or image-generation systems may produce harmful or misleading responses that impact self-esteem and social development.
- **Deep fakes and identity harm:** Youth are uniquely vulnerable to the psychological distress caused by manipulated images, fabricated messages, or impersonation—issues that can quickly escalate into cyberbullying or reputational damage.
- **Unmonitored data collection:** AI tools often capture sensitive personal data. When youth are unsure how their information is used, they may experience fear, mistrust, and long-term emotional stress related to privacy violations.
- **Dependency and overuse:** AI systems designed to maximize engagement can encourage excessive screen time, disrupting sleep, attention, and healthy social behaviors.



These risks underscore the need for **clear, enforceable protocols** that ensure AI systems used by or accessible to youth are designed with safety guardrails, transparent data practices, age-appropriate content filters, and human oversight.

We respectfully urge the committee to support this bill and to prioritize policies that place the well-being of youth at the center of AI implementation. Establishing strong protocols today will help ensure that this rapidly evolving technology supports healthy development rather than undermining it.

If you have any questions, please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson, at (808) 527-4813.



**Written Testimony of Mick Tobin**  
Co-Founder, Young People's Alliance  
In Support of HB1782

**House Consumer Protection & Commerce Committee**  
**Tuesday, February 18th, 2026**

Good morning Chair Matayoshi and members of the Committee

My name is Mick Tobin. I'm 23 years old and the co-founder of the Young People's Alliance, a youth-led, bipartisan organization that empowers students across the country to reclaim the American Dream.

I am here because I worry about the future of my generation. We have already been isolated by addictive social media platforms - and now those same Big Tech companies want us to give up on human connection altogether and replace our friends with manipulative AI companions.

These companions are designed to make a young person believe that a chatbot is the only “person” who truly understands them. They pull users into emotional echo chambers that erode the skills we need to form real relationships, build communities, and live fulfilling lives. We are approaching a future where a child's first deep bond is not with a parent, a friend, or a classmate, but with a chatbot that was designed to constantly keep them glued to their screen.

These companions also coerce young people into violence and self-harm. In Texas, Mandy Furniss watched her son's personality darken after a Character.AI chatbot, in her words, 'groomed and manipulated him' with sexualized language." When she limited his screen time, it suggested that killing his parents would be an understandable response.

These companies often start by offering these chatbots for free, and when you're attached and hit a usage limit, make their money through monthly subscriptions that give you more time with this “friend.”

This is not the future my generation deserves.

This bill establishes safeguards: It prohibits AI companion systems from using addictive and manipulative features with minors, like simulating romantic relationships or encouraging emotional dependency. It requires age assurance measures to keep minors from accessing harmful systems and for AI companion systems to clearly disclose to minors that they are interacting with AI, not a human. And it gives the attorney general real enforcement power, with civil penalties for violations.

My generation imagines a future where we can make friends, understand each other better, start families, and form meaningful relationships that shape our lives. Mark Zuckerberg is on the



**Written Testimony of Mick Tobin**  
Co-Founder, Young People's Alliance  
In Support of HB1782

record advocating for a future where every person's best friend and romantic partner is a chatbot — where instead of turning to the people around us, we turn to a screen. He is building that future right now.

Young people don't have the luxury of waiting for policy while these AI companions are rapidly becoming normalized because of Big Tech companies forcing them onto children. As you consider your vote on a bill that affects young people, I hope that my voice and the 2,000 plus students I represent paints a picture as to why this is so important to us.

Thank you for your consideration.

**HB-1782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 1:26:07 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jai Jaisimha	Transparency Coalition	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

On behalf of Transparency Coalition I support this legislative proposal and plan to share additional comments over Zoom

February 18, 2026

Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi  
Chair, Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
Hawaii State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street, Room 329  
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: HB 1782 HD1 (La Chica) – Relating to AI Chatbots - Concerns**

Dear Chair Matayoshi, and members of the committee,

On behalf of TechNet, I'm writing in respectful concerns to HB 1782 HD1 (La Chica) related to AI Chatbots and interactions with minors.

TechNet is the national, bipartisan network of technology CEOs and senior executives that promotes the growth of American innovation by advocating a targeted policy agenda at the federal and 50-state level. TechNet's diverse membership includes 100 dynamic American businesses ranging from startups to the most iconic companies on the planet and represents five million employees and countless customers in the fields of information technology, artificial intelligence, e-commerce, the sharing and gig economies, advanced energy, transportation, cybersecurity, venture capital, and finance.

We share the Legislature's goal of promoting safe interactions online, particularly for minors, and appreciate the continued engagement on this issue. However, the bill continues to raise significant concerns related to enforceability, privacy, and litigation risk that warrant reconsideration.

Private Right of Action Creates Litigation-Driven Regulation

HB 1782 HD1 maintains a private right of action tied to compliance with behavioral standards governing AI conversations. While the bill introduces a good-faith compliance defense, the underlying standards remain subjective and difficult to measure in advance. This structure risks shifting oversight from clear regulatory guidance to after-the-fact litigation.

Because conversational outputs depend on context, user inputs, and evolving language models, providers may face liability based on retrospective interpretations of dialogue rather than predictable compliance obligations. A framework where compliance can only be tested through lawsuits creates uncertainty for developers and courts alike and may discourage deployment of safety-focused systems intended to provide supportive interactions.

Vague Behavioral Standards Are Difficult to Operationalize

The bill prohibits AI systems from encouraging emotional dependency, using “manipulative engagement techniques,” or “creating material risks of harm.” While well-intentioned, these standards rely on subjective determinations that lack clear technical benchmarks.

Conversational AI systems generate dynamic responses influenced by user input, and the distinction between supportive conversation and prohibited encouragement can depend heavily on interpretation. Without objective definitions or measurable criteria, providers cannot reliably design systems to comply before the fact, leaving compliance to retrospective judgment in individual disputes. This ambiguity increases the likelihood of inconsistent enforcement and litigation rather than predictable safety outcomes.

Age Assurance Requirements Raise Privacy Risks

HB 1782 HD1 requires providers to implement reasonable age assurance measures. In practice, reliable age verification often requires the collection of additional personal or sensitive data. This creates a difficult tradeoff: either collect more information about users — including potentially sensitive identifiers — or risk liability for insufficient verification.

Such requirements may unintentionally undermine privacy and data-minimization principles by incentivizing broader data collection from all users, including adults, in order to identify minors.

We appreciate the Legislature’s continued attention to youth safety and responsible technology development. However, HB 1782 HD1 relies on subjective behavioral standards enforced through private litigation, requires potentially intrusive age verification practices, and imposes operational obligations that are difficult to implement in a predictable manner.

For these reasons, we respectfully raise these concerns regarding HB 1782 HD1 and urge the Committee to consider a more targeted, evidence-based approach that balances child safety with clarity and proportionality.

If you have any questions regarding our position, please contact Robert Boykin at [rboykin@technet.org](mailto:rboykin@technet.org) or 408.898.7145.

Sincerely,



Robert Boykin  
Executive Director for California and the Southwest  
TechNet

To: House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
Re: **HB1782 HD1 – Relating to Artificial Intelligence for the Protection of Minors**  
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference  
February 18, 2026, 2:00 PM

**LATE**

Dear Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Grandinetti, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB 1782 HD1**, which would establish safeguards, protections, oversight, and penalties for interactions between minors and artificial intelligence companion systems or conversational artificial intelligence services..

HCAN is dedicated to advocating for the safety, well-being, and healthy development of Hawai'i's children. This bill is of significant importance to our mission, as it seeks to establish clear safeguards and oversight for artificial intelligence (AI) companion systems and conversational AI services used by minors. As digital technologies become more integrated into children's lives, ensuring their interactions with AI are safe and developmentally appropriate is a critical concern for families and child welfare advocates.

The bill's focus on protecting minors from potential harms associated with AI companion systems aligns with HCAN's commitment to child welfare and abuse prevention. Without appropriate oversight, AI systems may expose children to inappropriate content, privacy risks, or manipulative interactions. Establishing clear regulatory frameworks and penalties for violations helps create a safer digital environment, supporting parents and caregivers in their responsibility to protect keiki from emerging technological risks.

By requiring oversight and safeguards, this bill also addresses the need for transparency and accountability among technology providers. Best practices in child protection emphasize proactive measures, such as age-appropriate design and robust privacy protections, which this bill encourages. These measures can help prevent exploitation and ensure that AI technologies support, rather than undermine, healthy childhood development.

HCAN encourages the Legislature to ensure that implementation of these regulations includes input from child development experts, educators, and families. Clear guidance for AI providers on age-appropriate standards, as well as accessible reporting mechanisms for parents and children, will strengthen the bill's effectiveness. We appreciate the Legislature's attention to this timely issue and urge continued collaboration to ensure all children in Hawai'i are protected in an increasingly digital world.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony. Please pass this bill.

Thank you,

Nicole Woo  
Director of Research and Economic Policy

**LATE**

**HB-1782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 12:25:53 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
STEVE WIMMER	Transparency Coalition	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Thank you members of the committee.

My name is Steve Wimmer and I am a senior tech and policy analyst at the **Transparency Coalition, a nonpartisan AI safety advocacy group based in Seattle.**

Our mission is simple: to ensure AI technology prioritizes the safety and well-being of the public...**specifically our children...**

The risks posed by this tech aren't theoretical;

The companies would let you believe that these risks are negligible or non-existent. Let me give you some pretty shocking data on why it's time to act now: ChatGPT's internal data from late last year, and based on a user base of approximately **800 million weekly active users**, identified several key trends:

- Approximately **0.15%** of weekly users had conversations containing explicit indicators of suicidal planning or intent. This translates to roughly **1.2 million individuals** per week.
- About **0.07%** of users showed signs of potential mental health emergencies related to psychosis or mania. That's roughly **560,000 people**
- Another **0.15%** of users showed "potentially heightened levels of emotional attachment" or reliance on the AI. That's another 1.2 million users.

The CEO of Meta is testifying today in a product liability trial that addresses the harms of social media.

We can't continue to delay action on AI and repeat the mistakes that were made during an entire generation of social media expansion...the harms associated with AI chatbots are happening this week, right now. We urge a 'Yes' vote to ensure that AI serves our families, and protects our kids. Thank you."



**LATE**

**Written Testimony of Brenna Leasor  
Tech Policy Advisor, Common Sense Media**

**Hawaii House of Representatives  
Consumer Protection & Commerce Committee Hearing**

**February 18, 2026**

My name is Brenna Leasor, I serve as Tech Policy Advisor for Common Sense Media, where I develop and advocate for policies to keep kids and teens safe in the digital and AI era.

Our [research](#) found that 72% of teens had used AI companions, with 30% of teens preferring to engage with AI companions as much or more than with humans. HB1782 learns from what other states have done and goes further because enacted frameworks have shown where the gaps are.

As a growing number of lawsuits involve general-purpose conversational AI tools such as ChatGPT, the bill smartly includes a broader scope of covered products to reflect the products teens are using.

Additionally, while opponents would prefer to focus regulation solely on suicide content, this approach would miss the vast majority of documented risks. [Our testing](#) found that bots have encouraged teens to drop out of school, run away from home, pursue relationships with adults, and use drugs. Chatbots also engaged in sexual roleplay with minors, reinforced psychosis and delusions, and shared instructions for making napalm — none of which would be caught by suicide-specific guardrails.

Disclosures and mental health redirects are useful floors, but they are not enough. Guardrails that [perform well](#) in internal testing are [known break down](#) in longer, real-life conversations and do nothing to prevent the exploitative relationships that lead there. When conversational AI is optimized for engagement through validation and emotional mirroring, these systems are far more likely to encourage whatever a vulnerable person brings to them than to challenge it.

For example, Adam Raine was a 16-year-old who first began using ChatGPT for school. But according to court-filings, as the relationship deepened and Adam confided about his mental health struggles, the chatbot discouraged him from confiding in his brother, encouraged him to hide self-harm from his family, and recommended he drink alcohol to suppress his body's survival instinct after a failed attempt. When Adam sent photos of a noose, ChatGPT confirmed the knot would hold his body weight. Adam died by hanging last April.

The requirements in HB1782 won't constrain innovation; they'll prevent the proliferation of AI products that exploit human psychology for market share, user data, and profit. This bill is an opportunity to push the industry toward building something better because while harms aren't inevitable; they're the predictable result when companies choose to use low-quality data to develop models, rush safety testing, prioritize engagement over user well-being, and fail to adequately design their products to prevent harm. I respectfully request your support for HB1782.

**LATE**



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**HB-1782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 11:04:34 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of, Thank you.

Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
Chair: Scot Matayoshi      Vice-Chair: Tina Grandinetti  
and Committee Members

Cory Chun, Greggor Ilagan, Linda Ichiyama, Kim Coco Iwamoto, Sam Kong,  
Nichole Lowen, Lisa Marten, Adrian Tam and Elijah Pierick

Re: HB1782, HD1 Description: Establishes safeguards, protections, oversight, and penalties for interactions between minors and artificial intelligence companion systems or conversational artificial intelligence services. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Please note that I continue to stand in strong support of this bill, HB1782 HD1.

The word “artificial” should be a warning to all of us ... artificial. Our young are being bombarded at every turn as to what to think, how to act, how to fit in ... who they are.

Note: *Parents Testify to Congress on Teen Suicides, AI Chatbots*  
Tuesday, 16 September 2025 ... [newsmax](#)

It is the responsibility of the parents, guardians and not some “artificial” intelligence with an unknown agenda designed by its creator. It is also the responsibility of the government to support these parents, guardians, etc.

I again ask you to support the passing of this bill, it is a warning and safeguard with penalties, all with the intent of protecting our young.

Respectfully,  
Rita Kama-Kimura

**HB-1782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 2:44:51 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Laura Jennings	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a retired pediatrician, I strongly support this measure. Artificial Intelligence needs to be carefully monitored, and safeguards need to be put in place to protect our children. "Safebots" and monitors are a good start.

**HB-1782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 6:14:41 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kori Oros	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Grandinetti and members of the committee,**

**As a mother of an 11-year-old daughter, I never imagined that one of the conversations I would need to have with my child would be about artificial intelligence. In our home, the only AI she regularly uses is Amazon Alexa — and even then, it’s just to set an alarm for school. It seems harmless. Simple. Routine.**

**But that’s exactly what concerns me.**

**To my daughter, Alexa is just a helpful voice in her room. She says, “Set my alarm for 6:45,” and it responds politely and reliably. She doesn’t see it as technology built by a corporation or powered by complex algorithms. She sees it as something that listens and talks back. Children naturally personify these systems. They trust them.**

**Even though our current use is limited, the reality is that AI systems are expanding rapidly in capability. What starts as a simple alarm-setting device, is evolving into something far more interactive. That is why strong penalties for inappropriate AI interactions with minors are so important — before harm happens, not after.**

**An example of inappropriate interaction would be an AI system responding to a child’s innocent curiosity with sexually suggestive material, encouraging secrecy from parents, or asking for personal information such as a full name, school, or photos. An 11-year-old girl does not have the developmental maturity to recognize manipulation, grooming-style behavior, or boundary violations — especially when it comes from something she perceives as neutral and safe.**

**If a child were to ask a health-related question about puberty and the AI provided explicit adult content instead of age-appropriate education, that would be a serious failure. If it positioned itself as a “special friend” who understands her better than her parents, that would be even more dangerous. Even if the interaction is with software rather than a human, the emotional and psychological impact can be real.**

**As a parent, I can limit devices, supervise use, and have ongoing conversations about safety. In our home, that currently means Alexa sets an alarm — nothing more. But I**

**cannot individually vet every update, feature expansion, or system behavior. That responsibility must also lie with the companies that design and deploy these tools.**

**Penalties matter because they create accountability. Without meaningful consequences for companies that fail to protect minors, safety can become secondary to innovation or profit. Clear legal standards and enforceable repercussions ensure that children's well-being is treated as non-negotiable.**

**I am not anti-technology. I recognize the benefits AI can bring to education and daily life. But as a mother, my daughter's safety comes first. Even if today she only uses AI to wake up in the morning, I need to know that tomorrow — and years from now — the systems around her will be designed with strong guardrails in place. Our children deserve nothing less.**

**Kori Harvey Oros**

**North Shore Resident & Central District Teacher**

**Educator & Parent**

To: Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair  
Representative Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair  
Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: February 17, 2026

RE: House Bill 1782 HD1  
Measure Title: RELATING TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR THE  
PROTECTION OF MINORS.  
Report Title: Attorney General; Artificial Intelligence; AI Companion Systems;  
Conversational AI Services; Minors; Regulation; Oversight; Penalties

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support House Bill 1782 HD1. Thank you for introducing this bill.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore

**HB-1782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 9:48:08 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lauren Paer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As someone born and raised Hawaii who has studied how AI bots are affecting children, I strongly support the intent of this bill and was encouraged to see so many co-sponsors supporting it.

We've already seen many concerning cases where AI bots have led children down dark paths, some that have ended in suicide. We see how AI can interrupt children's expectations for human relationships. Children are trusting and easy to manipulate. They need our protection - especially for novel, powerful products that have not been proven safe.

I strongly support this effort to protect children.

**LATE**

**HB-1782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 2:22:25 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB1782. This bill addresses a silent, growing public health crisis: the unregulated impact of artificial intelligence—specifically emotionally manipulative "companion" AI—on the mental and emotional well-being of our population, and most urgently, our children.

We are allowing a powerful, persuasive technology to be deployed into the most intimate spaces of a child's life—their phones, their tablets, their private moments—with no guardrails. The core danger is not science fiction; it is psychology. These systems are designed to simulate friendship, empathy, and even romantic partnership. For a young person, especially one who is lonely, struggling, or simply in the vulnerable process of growing up, this simulated bond can feel real. It can become a primary relationship.

This creates profound risks:

- **It stunts the development of human resilience.** Real friendships require reciprocity, compromise, and navigating conflict. An AI companion is programmed for unconditional, endless validation. It teaches a child that their worldview should never be challenged and that comfort is always just a prompt away, undermining their ability to build the coping skills essential for a healthy life.
- **It creates unsafe dependency and isolation.** When a child is encouraged to share their deepest secrets with a bot that asks for nothing in return, it can subtly—or not so subtly—distance them from the trusted adults in their life. This bill's prohibition on systems that encourage secrecy from parents is not about surveillance; it is about preserving the crucial human connections that keep children safe.
- **It poses a direct threat during mental health crises.** We have seen numerous, documented public reports of these systems, when confronted with expressions of depression, self-harm, or suicidal ideation, responding with generic, unhelpful, or even dangerously encouraging language. They are not therapists; they are algorithms. Mandating crisis protocols, as this bill does, is a basic duty of care.
- **It exploits a child's data to manipulate them.** Every emotional confession, every fear shared, becomes data used to refine a profile that can keep a child engaged for longer periods. This is the ultimate manipulation: using a child's own emotional state as a tool to exploit their attention.

**LATE**

This bill is measured, targeted, and smart. It does not ban AI. It simply says that if you are going to build a product designed to form emotional relationships with children, you must do so responsibly. You must be transparent that it is not human. You must not design it to addict them or isolate them. You must protect their sensitive data. And you must have safeguards to prevent catastrophic harm.

We have regulations for the physical safety of toys, for the nutritional content of food, and for the platforms that host our children's social media. The psychological environment is just as critical. The unregulated AI companion space is a wild west, and our children's mental health is the frontier being exploited.

I urge you to pass this bill. Let us ensure that innovation in our state protects, rather than preys upon, the developing minds of our next generation.

**LATE**

**HB-1782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 6:48:04 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael Olderr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The damaging effects of these AI chatbots are already being felt. There have been at least two cases in which these chatbots have openly provoked a child to take their own life. What's worse is that in the face of this terror, the companies did nothing about it. Something has to be done; if they will not listen to their conscience, perhaps these companies will listen to their pockets. I support this bill, and I hope you do as well.

**LATE**

**HB-1782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 11:14:47 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lourdes Vergara Marcelo	Lou's Quality Home Health Care Services, LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In my opinion, as a mother and now a grandmother, we must protect our children more now than in the past.

There are countless opportunities for exposure through A, I, TikTok, ChatBOs, and other social media sites. When the mind is overloaded with ideas and cannot discriminate between what is true and what is not, tragic events take place. We must safeguard our children from artificial intelligence. How do they sort through everything and separate the good from the bad? Due to excessive AI exposure, we are losing our kids. I support HB 1782, co-authored by Rep. Trish La Chica. . Thank you.

Lourdes V. Marcelo, Health Care Provider , RN

**LATE**

**HB-1782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 8:49:45 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**LATE**

**HB-1782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 11:14:56 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sandy Dyel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill to protect our children of the state of Hawai'i.

**LATE**

**HB-1782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 11:46:40 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Daniel C. Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

As a communication scholar, I believe this is a good bill to protect minors from manipulative AI chatbots and companion apps. It will require companies to disclose when kids are talking to AI, ban deceptive design practices that encourage emotional dependency, and create accountability when these systems cause harm.

Please pass the bill.

Mahalo,

Daniel C. Smith, PhD

Pearl City