



Attorney General Raoul Urges Facebook To Abandon Launch Of Instagram Kids

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CHICAGO— Attorney General Kwame Raoul, as part of a bipartisan coalition of 44 attorneys general, is urging Facebook to abandon its plans to launch a version of Instagram for children under the age of 13.

[In a letter](#) to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Raoul and the coalition contend that social media can be detrimental to children for myriad reasons and that Facebook has historically failed to protect the welfare of children on its platforms.

“Social media can be detrimental to the health and well-being of children, as it exposes them to dangerous online predators and cyberbullying,” Raoul said. “By creating Instagram Kids, Facebook would only be creating a platform that could harm youths who are not equipped to handle the challenges and responsibilities that come with having an Instagram account, which allows them to share images with strangers online. I urge Facebook to prioritize the safety of children and abandon its plans to launch Instagram Kids.

Raoul and the coalition expressed concerns over Facebook’s proposal, including research that social media can be harmful to the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of children; rapidly worsening concerns about cyberbullying on Instagram; use of the platform by predators to target children; Facebook’s checkered record in protecting the welfare of children on its platforms; and children’s lack of capacity to navigate the complexities of what they encounter online, including advertising, inappropriate content and relationships with strangers.

Raoul and the coalition argue that children are not equipped to handle the many challenges that come with having an Instagram account, including that they often lack a developed understanding of privacy. There is also a risk that predators may exploit children online and cloak their identities using the anonymity of the internet. One report found an increase of 200% in recorded instances in the use of Instagram to target and

abuse children over a six-month period in 2018. In 2020 alone, Facebook and Instagram reported 20 million child sexual abuse images.

Cyberbullying is also a major concern, and a 2017 survey found that 42% of young Instagram users had experienced cyberbullying on the platform, the highest percentage of any platform measured. As children spend more time online during the COVID-19 pandemic, these issues have likely been exacerbated.

Raoul and the coalition also cast doubt on Facebook's ability to protect children on its proposed Instagram platform and comply with relevant privacy laws such as the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). They point out that the company has a record of failing to protect the safety and privacy of children. For instance, Facebook's Messenger Kids app contained a glitch that allowed children to circumvent restrictions and join group chats with strangers.

Joining Raoul in today's letter are the attorneys general of Alaska, California, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Northern Mariana Islands, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.