

California enacts SB 243 with safeguards for users of companion chatbots

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Source: <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2025/10/13/governor-newsom-signs-bills-to-further-strengthen-californias-leadership-in-protecting-children-online>

Text saved 18 Oct 2026 (the page as published).

SHA-256 of the saved text: 0ff3d57257d303e444be5738dd746dff0d44d82e444f6123a45b8cfd1622334

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News

Oct 13, 2025

Governor Newsom signs bills to further strengthen California's leadership in protecting children online

What you need to know: Governor Newsom signed legislation to further protect children online and address emerging threats as technology continues to develop — maintaining the state's position as a national leader in both safeguarding kids and encouraging innovation.

SACRAMENTO – Governor Newsom today signed new landmark legislation to further strengthen the state's protections for children online and create safeguards for new and emerging technology, such as artificial intelligence (AI). The legislation adds required features for platforms and products such as age verification, protocols to address suicide and self-harm, warnings regarding social media and companion chatbots, and stronger penalties for those who profit from illegal deepfakes — helping to ensure children's safety remains front and center.

"Emerging technology like chatbots and social media can inspire, educate, and connect – but without real guardrails, technology can also exploit, mislead, and endanger our kids. We've seen some truly horrific and tragic examples of young people harmed by unregulated tech, and we won't stand by while companies continue without necessary limits and accountability. We can continue to lead in AI and technology, but we must do it responsibly — protecting our children every step of the way. Our children's safety is not for sale."

Governor Gavin Newsom

"Everything we do begins with our children — their safety, their health, and their well-being. California has always led in innovation, but true leadership also means setting limits when it matters most, because our kids deserve a world that values them more than the technology around them. These bills establish guardrails that protect our children's health and safety while ensuring innovation moves forward responsibly, showing that we can have both at once, always with future generations in mind."

First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom

California has long stood as a bold leader in protecting children from the danger of emerging technology. Today's signings follow other landmark legislation to protect children from social media addiction , strong privacy requirements , and nation-leading transparency measures .

The bills will help protect children online by creating:

- ✓ New safeguards on AI chatbots by establishing requirements that "companion chatbot" platforms create protocols to identify and address users' suicidal ideation or expressions of self-harm. Platforms must also disclose that interactions are artificially generated, and minors must be provided break reminders and prevented from viewing sexually explicit images generated by the chatbot. Platforms will be required to share protocols for dealing with self-harm and statistics regarding how often they provided users with crisis center prevention notifications to the Department of Public Health. Legislation also establishes a prohibition against chatbots representing themselves as health care professionals.
- ✓ Required age verifications by operating system and app store providers to help prevent children from

accessing inappropriate or dangerous content online.

✓ Social media warning labels to help warn young users about the harms associated with extended use of social media platforms.

✓ Stronger penalties for deepfake pornography by expanding the cause of action to allow victims, including minors, to seek civil relief of up to \$250,000 per action against third parties who knowingly facilitate or aid in the distribution of nonconsensual sexually explicit material.

✓ Guidance to prevent cyberbullying through requiring the California Department of Education (CDE), on or before June 1, 2026, to adopt a model policy on how to address reported acts of cyberbullying that occur outside of school hours, and requires local educational agencies to adopt the resulting policy or a similar policy developed with local input.

✓ Clear accountability for harm caused by AI technology by preventing those who develop, alter, or use artificial intelligence from escaping liability by asserting that the technology acted autonomously.

The full list of the signed bills to protect children and strengthen the safety of technology and online platforms include:

AB 56 by Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan (D-Orinda). Social media: warning labels.

AB 316 by Assemblymember Maggy Krell (D-Sacramento). Artificial intelligence: defenses.

AB 489 by Assemblymember Mia Bonta (D-Oakland). Health care professions: deceptive terms or letters: artificial intelligence.*

AB 566 by Assemblymember Josh Lowenthal (D-Long Beach). California Consumer Privacy Act of 2018: opt-out preference signal.*

AB 621 by Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan (D-Orinda). Deepfake pornography.

AB 656 by Assemblymember Pilar Schiavo (D-Santa Clarita). Account cancellation.*

AB 772 by Assemblymember Josh Lowenthal (D-Long Beach). Cyberbullying: off-campus acts: model policy.*

AB 853 by Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (D-Oakland). California AI Transparency Act. A signing message can be found here .

AB 979 by Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin (D-Thousand Oaks). California Cybersecurity Integration Center: artificial intelligence.*

AB 1043 by Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (D-Oakland). Age verification signals: software applications and online services. A signing message can be found here .

SB 50 by Senator Angelique Ashby (D-Sacramento). Connected devices: device protection requests.

SB 53 by Senator Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco). Artificial intelligence models: large developers.*

SB 243 by Senator Steve Padilla (D-San Diego). Companion chatbots.

SB 361 by Senator Josh Becker (D-Menlo Park). Data brokers: data collection and deletion.*

SB 446 by Senator Melissa Hurtado (D-Bakersfield). Data breaches: customer notification.*

SB 524 by Senator Jesse Arreguin (D-Berkeley). Law enforcement agencies: artificial intelligence.*

*previously signed

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