

June 7, 2022

Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Patty Murray  
Chairwoman, Senate Committee on  
Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Richard Burr  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on  
Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions  
217 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senate Majority Leader Schumer, Senate Minority Leader McConnell, Chairwoman Murray, and Ranking Member Burr,

We are child advocates and researchers writing to urge the Senate to include S. 971, the bipartisan Children and Media Research Advancement Act (CAMRA), in the important mental health legislative package you are putting together. CAMRA would fund overdue and much-needed longitudinal research through the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study how technology use affects children's and teen's development.

This legislation could not be more relevant to the national discussion about today's mental health crisis. How little we truly know about how technology impacts youth mental health is dangerous, especially during a time in which media usage has spiked and is widely considered to be associated with children and teens' worsening mental health. Existing research often comes from the companies themselves, or does not utilize longitudinal methods to understand how media use impacts development and well-being over time. There is even less research on other types of technology besides social media. The fact is that we need to examine all types of technology used by children and teens. For example, virtual reality platforms are becoming increasingly popular with children and teens, yet researchers have only just started looking into the potential psychological risks of using VR, which includes addiction, increased aggression, and disassociation, as well as exposure to sexual content and abuse.<sup>1</sup>

We need the research CAMRA would authorize to better prepare parents, policymakers, and companies for what technology emerges next and to better protect youth mental and physical health. This research would inform industry so it can develop online products and services that are designed with children and teens' health and well-being in mind. It would also enable policymakers to identify areas in which there is a need for legislation. As technology advances, the potential harms it can inflict on mental health will only become greater.

**We strongly support the work you are doing on mental health and we urge you to include the bi-partisan, bi-cameral CAMRA in the Senate's mental health legislative package.**

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<sup>1</sup> Katie Joseff and Nelson Reed, *What are Kids Doing in the Metaverse?*, Common Sense (Mar. 23, 2022).

Sincerely,

Center for Digital Democracy

Children and Screens Institute of Digital Media and Child Development

Common Sense Media

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action

Fairplay

REDC Consortium