

Our Voice

— MONTHLY —

April 1, 2024

Our **Voices** Matter. Our **Families** Matter.
Our **Careers** Matter. Our **Education** Matters.
Our **Lives** Matter.

Lynn Fitch



A Message from Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch

Act NOW to Protect Children Online

Tomorrow, Tuesday, April 2, the Mississippi Legislature has a deadline to report an important bill out of committee - a bill meant to help parents protect their children online (HB 1126). It passed the House unanimously. But in the Senate it has been referred to two committees and it must clear both of those committees before the Senate finishes business tomorrow.

The Walker Montgomery Protecting Children Online Act gives parents some extra tools for keeping their children safe online. And let's face it, our children are online a lot. In fact, 91 percent of children have a smart phone by the age of 14. There are lots of wonderful things for children online, but there is also a lot of danger. One in five children is sexually solicited online.

Even the most vigilant of parents needs a little help. And HB 1126 gives them that help:

HB 1126 requires that parents give their children permission to get on social media.

HB 1126 requires that social media companies safeguard children's privacy and identifying information.

HB 1126 requires that social media companies develop strategies to prevent children from harmful materials online, like grooming by predators, promotion of self-harm and eating disorders, stalking and bullying, and glorification of drug abuse.

Several states have given their parents assistance like this: Utah, Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana. Florida just joined them. And Georgia is poised to be

next, having passed its bill on Friday.

Mississippi needs to pass this bill, too. We cannot sit and wait for Congress to act. We cannot leave the burden entirely on parents. We cannot allow Big Tech to bully us into complacency. There is too much on the line. Our children are just too important.

If you are not familiar with Walker Montgomery's tragic story and do not know why HB 1126 is named for him, I urge you to watch [this video](#) that his father recorded asking for all of us to help pass this bill.

Walker was only a sophomore in high school when he was caught up in a sextortion scam via social media. No child should be in the situation he was in, preyed upon and feeling helpless and without any other option than suicide. No parent should be in the situation his parents are in now, having to make their lives a mission to make sense and purpose out of their little boy's death.

Walker's father is asking us all to help by asking the Mississippi Senate to pass the Walker Montgomery Protecting Children Online Act. Please reach out to your Senator and ask him or her to report this bill from both the Judiciary A and Judiciary B Committees before the Tuesday deadline.

Help make Walker's life ... and death ... mean something, and let our Senators know how important this bill is to you.

May God Bless You,

