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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG Kaul Joins Bipartisan Coalition Filing a Federal Lawsuit Against Meta for Harming Youth Mental Health

MADISON, Wis. – Today, Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul joined a coalition of 42 attorneys general throughout the country in suing Meta in federal and state courts alleging that the company knowingly designed and deployed harmful features on Instagram and its other social media platforms that purposefully addict children and teens. At the same time, Meta falsely assured the public that these features are safe and suitable for young users.

“We must keep our kids safe—and that includes from dangers online,” said Attorney General Kaul. “Adequate protections should be in place to protect kids from harms associated with social media, and parents must receive accurate information about potential dangers to their kids.”

The attorneys general assert that Meta’s business practices violate state consumer protection laws and the federal Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). These practices have harmed and continue to harm the physical and mental health of children and teens and have fueled what the U.S. Surgeon General has [deemed](#) a “youth mental health crisis” which has ended lives, devastated families, and impacted a generation of young people.

“Consumer rights and protections matter, especially when it involves our youth,” said Secretary Randy Romanski of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. “It doesn’t matter whether your child uses Facebook, Instagram, or another social media platform. Companies should not be allowed to

misrepresent their products and their impact, or use tactics to manipulate youth and their parents into using those products.”

The federal [complaint](#), joined by 33 states and filed in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, alleges that Meta knew of the harmful impact of its platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, on young people. Instead of taking steps to mitigate these harms, it misled the public about the harms associated with use of its platform, concealing the extent of the psychological and health harms suffered by young users addicted to use of its platforms. The complaint further alleges that Meta knew that young users, including those under 13, were active on the platforms, and knowingly collected data from these users without parental consent. It targeted these young users noting, as reported in a 2021 [Wall Street Journal article](#), that such a user base was “valuable, but untapped.”

While much of the complaint relies on confidential material that is not yet available to the public, publicly available sources including those previously released by former Meta employees detail that Meta profited by purposely making its platforms addictive to children and teens. Its platform algorithms push users into descending “rabbit holes” in an effort to maximize engagement. Features like infinite scroll and near-constant alerts were created with the express goal of hooking young users. These manipulative tactics continually lure children and teens back onto the platform. As Aza Raskin, the original developer of the infinite scroll concept, [noted to the BBC](#) about the feature’s addictive qualities: “If you don't give your brain time to catch up with your impulses, . . . you just keep scrolling.”

Meta knew these addictive features harmed young people’s physical and mental health, including undermining their ability to get adequate sleep, but did not disclose the harm nor did they make meaningful changes to minimize the harm. Instead, they claimed their platforms were safe for young users.

These choices, the complaint alleges, violate state consumer protection laws and COPPA. The federal complaint seeks injunctive and monetary relief to rectify the harms caused by these platforms.

In parallel complaints filed in state courts today, eight states have made similar allegations. These lawsuits are the result of a bipartisan, nationwide investigation. Nearly all the attorneys general in the country have worked together since 2021 to investigate Meta for providing and promoting its social media platforms to children and young adults while use is associated with physical and mental health harms. While some states have pursued litigation in state court and others in collective

federal action, the attorneys general will continue to work together as the litigation continues.

The multistate coalition that brought today's complaint is also investigating TikTok's conduct on a similar set of concerns. That investigation remains ongoing, and states have pushed for adequate disclosure of information and documents in litigation related to TikTok's failure to provide adequate discovery in response to requests by the Tennessee Attorney General's office.

Wisconsin is joining the federal lawsuit along with Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia. Florida is filing its own federal lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida.

Filing lawsuits in their own state courts are Arkansas, the District of Columbia, Idaho, Iowa, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah, and Vermont.