

HB 3281 -- SOFTWARE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Byrnes

The bill creates the "PROTECT Students Act" and establishes a statewide framework governing the use of digital tools, software, and online platforms in Missouri public schools. The bill requires the State Board of Education to adopt a single statewide digital privacy agreement that all educational technology "vendors", as that term is defined in the bill, must execute before their products can be used with students. The agreement sets uniform rules for data collection, storage, security, and disclosure and prohibits vendors from selling student information or using it for targeted advertising.

The bill further restricts the design and operation of the "software", as that term is defined in the bill, used in schools and prohibits the use of features considered addictive or manipulative, including, but not limited to, infinite scrolling, autoplay functions, and reward systems intended to increase screen time. The software must not use student data to train artificial intelligence models, influence student emotions or beliefs, or display content that is sexually explicit, violent, or otherwise harmful among other restrictions specified in the bill. Instructional materials related to human sexuality will be provided only with written parental consent. Software must not require open-internet access for core educational functions.

This bill also requires independent evaluation of educational software to ensure academic effectiveness and compliance with state standards. Vendors must disclose all thirdparty data practices, maintain strong cybersecurity protections, and store student data within the United States. The SBE must monitor compliance to the provision of this Act with periodic compliance audits and will issue a written report, as provided in the bill.

The bill authorizes schools and SBE to terminate contracts with vendors that violate the agreement and directs SBE to maintain a public list of approved independent evaluators. Parents can submit written complaints to the SBE about allegations relating to the provisions of the bill and the Board must review and notify the parent of the determination and take appropriate enforcement action if necessary.

The bill requires that software currently in use in the State be brought into compliance within 24 months and SBE to provide schools with technical guidance and implementation timelines.

Schools must provide parents with an annual list of all instructional software produces, as outline in the bill and the Attorney General will have the authority to enforce the provisions of this Section and develop a process to investigate upon referral or independent determination that violations of the policy and procedures have occurred.