



Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

MomsRising.org
MamásConPoder.org

May 24, 2018

Mark Zuckerberg
Chief Executive Officer
Facebook, Inc.
1601 Willow Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Re: Facebook Messenger Kids

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg,

Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (CCFC) and MomsRising are writing to follow up on the letter CCFC sent on January 30, 2018, signed by 118 public health advocates who urged you to discontinue Messenger Kids, Facebook's app for children under the age of 13. Our letter explained that a growing body of research demonstrates that excessive use of digital devices and social media is harmful to children and teens, making it very likely this new app will undermine children's healthy development.

As you know, members of Congress share the concerns we expressed in our letter. Senators Markey and Blumenthal wrote to you requesting information about what sensitive information Facebook is collecting from children using Messenger Kids, how you are protecting it, how you are using it, and with whom you are sharing it. And when you testified before Congress on April 19, 2018, Senator Durbin questioned you regarding the concerns stated in our letter.

We are writing to report that more than 21,000 people have signed our petition urging you to discontinue Messenger Kids. The petition signatures are in the attached files. Here is what the petition asked, specifically:

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg,

Please do not target kids. Research shows that excessive social media use is already harming adolescents and teens. Younger children are even less equipped to deal with the interpersonal challenges and addictive power of social media. Kids need time and space to experience the physical world and develop healthy face-to-face relationships. Use your enormous reach and influence to promote children's wellbeing: pull the plug on Messenger Kids.

The signatories are people whose opinions should matter to Facebook. They are people who see the impacts of technology and social media on children every day, including educators, health professionals, and parents and caregivers. They are distressed about the impacts of technology

and social media on the wellbeing of children and families, and they are asking Facebook to do the right thing by cancelling Facebook Messenger Kids.

Many signers left personal comments for you, and we urge you to read them. Below is a very small sampling of the comments to illustrate the breadth of concerns about Messenger Kids and show you the passion and insight of those imploring you to put the wellbeing of children ahead of Facebook's profits:

1) Whitney Buckley, Fairfield, CT

As a psychologist in private practice and in schools, I see the negative effects of internet and in particular social media use on the mood, interpersonal skills, frustration tolerance, sleep, and many other aspects of functioning of children. Children do not have the capacity to understand these effects in order to make a choice in their best interests, and many parents are under- or misinformed.

2) Jamie Greene, Psychologist, Mt. Kisco, NY

Social media is already damaging the emotional/social growth of children. Do not lower the age to younger children, who are already more impressionable, and do not have the cognitive maturity to differentiate social messages.

3) Erin Smith, Speech Language Pathologist, Canada

I have children of my own and I work with children and families who have children with communication challenges. One of my biggest challenges is having parents and children interact with each other face to face. Coaching parents to put down their devices is hard enough... and convincing them to have their children put down the ipad/phone is also a challenge. Providing 'age appropriate' social media is ridiculous... kids need to learn how to interact with people by being with people... not by interacting via social media and feeling 'left out' if they aren't able to participate. The idea of this is frustrating to me as a parent and a professional.

4) Kris Alman, MD, Oregon

The FTC requires companies comply with truth in advertising standards when advertising directly to children. This app would have to come with a black box warning, just as the Surgeon General requires on cigarettes. The problem is we have no idea how social media addiction affects the brains of younger children! But it's clear that adolescents are more depressed. Mr. Zuckerberg, Facebook should not be a gateway drug for internet addiction and all the neuro-cognitive and psychological ills that will ensue for these kids.

5) Marlene Green, Speech Language Pathologist, Ontario, Canada

It is the right of a young child to access experiential learning and imaginative play with peers to develop language and social skills. It will be a tragedy if we breed a society that does not have face to face human interaction at its core. Apps are designed to hook all people—this is immoral and unethical for all but inexcusable for young children.

6) Cyndi Cummings, School counselor, Oregon

I am deeply concerned about the impact of social media and smartphones are having on the development of children. I am now seeing in my office student after student struggling with anxiety and depression compounded by the use of technology. We have a moral obligation to set limits for our kids so they have a chance to cognitively and socio/emotionally grow into young people who can interact with the world around them in a healthy way.

7) Micah Resnick, Pediatrician, New York

The harm is real. The race to keep children's attention trains them to replace their self-worth with likes, encourages comparison with others, and creates the constant illusion of missing out.

8) Karen Walker, Librarian, Colorado

Our minds need rest and time to reflect. To use our imaginations and to connect with other people. We have social brains that learn more from people around us than we do from devices. Social media does not teach compassion, but envy, jealousy and inadequacy. The more we normalize device use and social media use, the more we hurt the future of our children and our communities.

9) Anna Tush, School Psychologist, Virginia

Please, have some decency and do what is right by young children and their brains. If you lived the job of a school psychologist in school, you would see the havoc that sites such as Facebook wreak on our children. Do the right thing.

10) Jimmie Quick, Digital marketing, Tennessee

I make my living with social media. But please, do not do this to the children. They are already anxiety-ridden enough.

11) Daniel Warren, MD, Wichita, KS

What happens to a child who grows up believing that a pre-planned, 2-dimensional, screen-based interaction is an appropriate substitute for a relationship? We are actively re-shaping what it means to be a human with technology that promises harmless cultural evolution, but we have no idea, ultimately, how humanity will bear this burden.

12) Deborah M., Ventura, CA

Cyber bullying is very real and destructive for children, so why open up more children to this dangerous peer pressure generator? When you were young, you didn't know about things that happened at other people's houses in real time or that you were being excluded from social events, neither did I, and neither should young children. Many children, including my own children have been bullied on-line, and it is mentally destructive to their development. You don't have to take my word for it, call the school

psychologist at your local middle school and ask them how many kids are dealing with this.

13) Kathy H., Nashville, TN

40 years of teaching and researching human development at Vanderbilt University have made me keenly aware that children in the preteen years most definitely do NOT need to try to engage in on-line relationships! Face-to-face interactions, engagement, and interactive learning in the pre-teen years offer an essential foundation for the successful development of relationships in the mid- to later teen years, but starting in the pre-teens is NOT developmentally sound!

14) Kathleen F., Sacramento, CA

Access to screen time is a constant battle in my home! Kids need to learn that their words can help or harm by having personal interactions with other people—a messenger app for kids will just add to the lack of social and emotional development that this type of media encourages at a younger age. Please don't make parenting any harder than it already is!

15) Suzy H., Shorewood, WI

Almost every parent I talk to has felt some despair about the inappropriate messages her child has received (bullying, escalating small problems into major disputes, etc.) Beyond the messages is the problematic medium itself: children (and adults for that matter!) need to grow in their abilities to relate to others face to face. Don't help rob children of their efforts to become more fully human!

16) Phyllis C., Tifton, GA

As a clinical psychologist, I've seen firsthand the damage that occurs when children who are too young get on social media. Please stop this.

17) Barbara B., Rochester, NY

As a former School Counselor, I have seen the difficult results of social media on children. Please take this seriously. Choose children over profit.

18) Rhea O., Laurel, IA

As a mom and grandma, absolutely NOT!! Our young children should be doing other things.

19) Rae J., Beaverton, OR

As a parent of 4 kids, I urge you to help us look out for their best interests. It's so hard to help them make good decisions, and stuff like this just makes our job even harder. Please don't push more social media on people's brains that aren't developed enough to deal with

it. Even adults have difficulty navigating through their online social lives. Please listen to parents.

20) Steven S., Canandaigua, NY

As a pediatrician, I see first hand the significant negative behavioral, developmental, and emotional consequences of increasing screen time for our nation's youth. Please put children's well being over company profits!

21) Harriet A., Dunsmuir, CA

As a retired teacher, I already have seen that kids spend far too much time on social media....children need to develop social skills with their own peers on the playground, in the classroom and during lunchtime/recess. They do not need the intrusion of social media in their lives!

22) LuEllen C., Erie, CO

As a teacher I see daily the negative impact social media can have on children as a place where some feel free to say things they often would never say in person. Encouraging even younger children to become involved in this complex world of targeted ads, cyber bullying and fake news is utterly irresponsible! Please consider the harm this would cause and put the welfare of children above your bottom line.

Especially after your testimony before Congress, we assume you are more acutely aware than ever of your obligation to consider how Facebook's practices impact our society. Please heed the caution of the advocates who signed the January 30, 2018 letter. Hear the voices of the public who have sent a message with these 21,000 petition signatures. Pull the plug on Messenger Kids.

Sincerely,

Josh Golin
Executive Director
Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner
Executive Director/CEO
MomsRising