

CHRISSY HOULAHAN
6TH DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

1727 LONGWORTH BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

201 PENN STREET
SUITE 201
READING, PA 19601

709 E. GAY STREET
SUITE 4
WEST CHESTER, PA 19380



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON
INTELLIGENCE

August 1, 2024

Secretary Miguel C. Cardona
400 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Thank you for your leadership at the Department of Education and support of students, teachers, and communities across our country. I write to you out of deep concern surrounding the challenges of social media and responsible technology usage in schools nationwide. The New York Times¹ recently provided a [disturbing account](#) of eighth-grade students creating social media accounts to impersonate their teachers. Worse yet, these accounts were used to post content that the Times described as “disparaging, lewd, racist and homophobic videos”. These young students used family photos pulled from teachers’ genuine online profiles or gathered from their classrooms to target and harass these educators.

As horrifying as this incident is, I fear that as social media becomes more and more ubiquitous there is a danger that these abuses could become more common. It is crucial that we do all we can to provide our country’s young people with the media and technology education that can help them understand that this behavior is wrong, and perhaps in the most egregious examples, unlawful.

In particular, the Perkins Innovation and Modernization grant program is one tool that could be utilized to provide our nation’s schools with the resources to deliver career and technical education programming that incentivizes a safe and respectful tech ecosystem. Should additional funding become available for this grant program, I ask that that your department publicize that applicants can use this money for technology and social media literacy curricula. Additionally, as your department reviews applications for this funding, I ask that you prioritize applications with a focus on responsible technology use.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/06/technology/tiktok-fake-teachers-pennsylvania.html>

Second, as you proceed with future competitions of the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) program, that you keep this topic in mind. It is critical that teachers and principals also have the training and resources they need to deliver the kind of 21st century curriculum that our students need – both in the classroom and out in the wider world. Already, this program is funding adolescent literacy planning and implementation. It is clearly well positioned to make a difference on technology and media literacy.

Third, as the department collects data on incidents of bullying and harassment through the Civil Rights Data Collection and other sources, I ask you to prioritize capturing information on incidents involving social media generally, and deep fakes specifically. It is essential our nation's policy makers are armed with the data necessary to resolve these particular challenges.

Lastly, I ask that you work with the relevant experts at the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, and Labor to promote a whole of government approach in promoting media and tech literacy. While this is first and foremost about respect and decency, it also has real-world implications. Unfortunately, without clear instruction on these topics, our students will be ill-prepared to participate in our nation's workforce or even join our armed services. A strong response from all corners of the federal government is necessary to support the next generation and foster the skills needed to engage with technology effectively and responsibly.

In your response, I hope you can share more about your plans to promote technology and media literacy education across the Department. Thank you for your leadership at this important moment.

Sincerely,



Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress