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PRESS RELEASE

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CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY INSTITUTE ISSUES STATEMENT ON CALIFORNIA STATE SENATE'S DECISION TO KILL AB 2408, WHICH WOULD HAVE PROTECTED VULNERABLE TEENS FROM PREDATORY ACTIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

SAN DIEGO, CA — Aug. 11, 2022 — The California State Senate today killed Assembly Bill 2408, a bi-partisan bill that sought to address the urgent need to prevent social media giants from knowingly using techniques that make addicts of child users, something disclosed by the Facebook whistleblower's leaked documents and which experts say is a contributor to the current and unprecedented rise in teen suicides and major depression; a rise that parallels the rise of social media use of children.

The bill was authored by Republican Assemblymember Jordan Cunningham and Democrat Buffy Wicks and supported by a vast number of mental health professionals, child advocacy groups, entertainment industry professionals, and consumer and civil rights groups. You can read more about the bill, co-sponsored by the Children's Advocacy Institute (CAI) at the University of San Diego School of Law and Common Sense Media here: www.sandiego.edu/cai/advocacy/legislation/ab2408.php.

CAI's Executive Director, Robert C. Fellmeth, Price Professor of Public Interest Law at the University of San Diego School of Law, released the following statement:

Turning a deaf ear to the pleas of anguished children, terrified parents, and experts all warning that social media use is contributing to an epidemic of teen girls committing suicide, the California Senate's fiscal committee today

handed a horrifying victory to Facebook and social media giants that are knowingly making addicts of our children by, in secret and without a vote, killing a bi-partisan bill that previously had not a single no vote cast against it.

The Senate's fiscal Committee did this despite us living in a declared teen mental health emergency, despite the Big Tech opposition heartlessly offering not a single amendment or alternative to the bill, despite the authors taking every amendment asked of them by policy Committee chairs, and despite it being the only bill in the Legislature addressing the social media aspect of our current teen mental health emergency.

No other way to say it: today's defeat in Sacramento is a crushing defeat for struggling parents, desperately ill children, and for stemming the epidemic of teen suicides and depression, and a great Sacramento triumph for Facebook and other multi-billion dollar social media companies that knowingly make addicts of children for profit. And, they will have to triumph year after year and forever because this bill will come back every single year until our children are safe from those who would profit from their pain.

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The Children's Advocacy Institute (CAI), founded at the nonprofit University of San Diego School of Law in 1989, is one of the nation's premiere academic, research, and advocacy organizations working to improve the lives of children and youth. More information is available at www.caichildlaw.org.