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Honorable Congressman John James

As the Sheriff of Livingston County, I am writing in strong support of the App Store Accountability Act (H.R. 3149). Our deputies – and those across the country – see a growing number of cases where criminal activity begins online. This legislation would give families a critical layer of protection to keep children safe.

Across Michigan, we are seeing an alarming increase in crimes that start online. Predators are using gaming platforms, chat features, and social apps that mask identity and allow direct access to children. According to the Michigan State Police, online platforms “can be like opening a door right into your child’s bedroom.” The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children has reported a 300% increase in online enticement cases between 2021 and 2023. Last year, the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program supported nearly 203,000 investigations and more than 12,600 arrests nationwide. These numbers reflect the reality that we see on the ground.

By the time these cases reach law enforcement, much of the harm has already occurred. While we work tirelessly to investigate these cases and make arrests, meaningful prevention must happen earlier – before a dangerous app ever reaches a child’s device.

The App Store Accountability Act would help families do exactly that. By requiring app stores to verify a user’s age, obtain parental approval before minors download apps or make in-app purchases, and apply accurate age ratings, the bill provides parents with a clear checkpoint that does not exist today. These safeguards understandably have broad public support—88% of parents agree that app stores should involve parents before giving minors access to apps.

This legislation offers a practical, commonsense way to reduce the risk to children and to support the work of law enforcement. I respectfully urge the committee to advance the App Store Accountability Act and help protect families in Livingston County and across the country.

Thank you for your commitment to public safety and to our nation’s children.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Murphy Sheriff, Livingston County - Michigan