



# NEWS RELEASE

Attorney General Mike Hilgers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Bipartisan Coalition of Attorneys General File Lawsuits Against Meta for Harming Youth Mental Health Through Its Social Media Platforms**

Lincoln -- Today, Attorney General Mike Hilgers joined 41 other state attorneys general in suing Meta in federal and state courts around the country. The complaints allege that the company knowingly designed and deployed harmful features on Instagram and its other social media platforms that purposefully addict children and teens. At the same time, Meta falsely assured the public that these features are safe and suitable for young users.

The attorneys general assert that Meta's business practices violate state consumer protection laws and the federal Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). These practices have harmed and continue to harm the physical and mental health of children and teens and have fueled what the U.S. Surgeon General has [deemed](#) a "youth mental health crisis" which has ended lives, devastated families, and damaged the potential of a generation of young people.

"States across our nation have come together to stand up for parents and protect our kids," said General Hilgers. "Meta deceived parents and manipulated teens into using platforms it knew was harming them. Our office is committed to fighting deception and illegal business practices in all forms, especially when they're hurting our kids."

The federal complaint, joined by 33 states and filed in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, alleges that Meta knew of the harmful impact of its platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, on young people. Instead of taking steps to mitigate these harms, it misled the public about the harms associated with use of its platform, concealing the extent of the psychological and health harms suffered by young users addicted to use of its platforms. The complaint further alleges that Meta knew that young users, including those under 13, were active on the platforms, and knowingly collected data from these users without parental consent. It targeted these young users noting, as reported in a 2021 [Wall Street Journal article](#), that such a user base was "valuable, but untapped."

The federal complaint, portions of which remain under seal, details how Meta purposely made its platforms addictive to children and teens. Its platform algorithms push users into descending "rabbit holes" in an effort to maximize engagement. Features like infinite scroll and near-constant alerts were created with

the express goal of hooking young users. These manipulative tactics continually lure children and teens back onto the platform.

Meta knew these addictive features harmed young people's physical and mental health, but did not disclose the harm nor did it make meaningful changes to minimize the harm. Instead, it claimed its platforms were safe for young users. These choices, the complaint alleges, violate state consumer protection laws and COPPA. The federal complaint seeks injunctive and monetary relief to rectify the harms caused by these platforms.

The States' lawsuits are the result of a bipartisan, nationwide investigation. Nearly all the attorneys general in the country have worked together since 2021 to investigate Meta for providing and promoting its social media platforms to children and young adults while use is associated with physical and mental health harms. While some states have pursued litigation in state court and others in collective federal action, the attorneys general will continue to work together as the litigation continues.

States joining the federal lawsuit are Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Florida is filing its own federal lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida.

Filing lawsuits in their own state courts are the District of Columbia, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah, and Vermont.

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*Court Filing Attached*

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