



THE GOLDHABER WARNINGS REPORT



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WARNING LABELS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA: PROTECTING YOUR CHILDREN IN THE DIGITAL AGE

For decades, Americans have relied on warning labels to alert consumers to hidden dangers. Cigarette packages warn of cancer. Alcohol labels caution pregnant women. Medications disclose side effects. Yet one of the most powerful and potentially addictive products used by millions of children every day carries virtually no warning at all: social media.

In 2024, as I wrote in the September, 2024 issue of this newsletter, then-U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy called on Congress to require cigarette-style warning labels on social media platforms, arguing that parents and children deserve to know that excessive use has been linked to anxiety, depression, body image problems, sleep disruption, and other mental health concerns. He stated that social media had become an important contributor to the youth mental health crisis and that warning labels could help increase awareness among families.

Unfortunately, that proposal has stalled under the new administration. The opportunity to provide parents with basic health information appears to have been abandoned just as evidence of social media's harmful effects continues to mount.



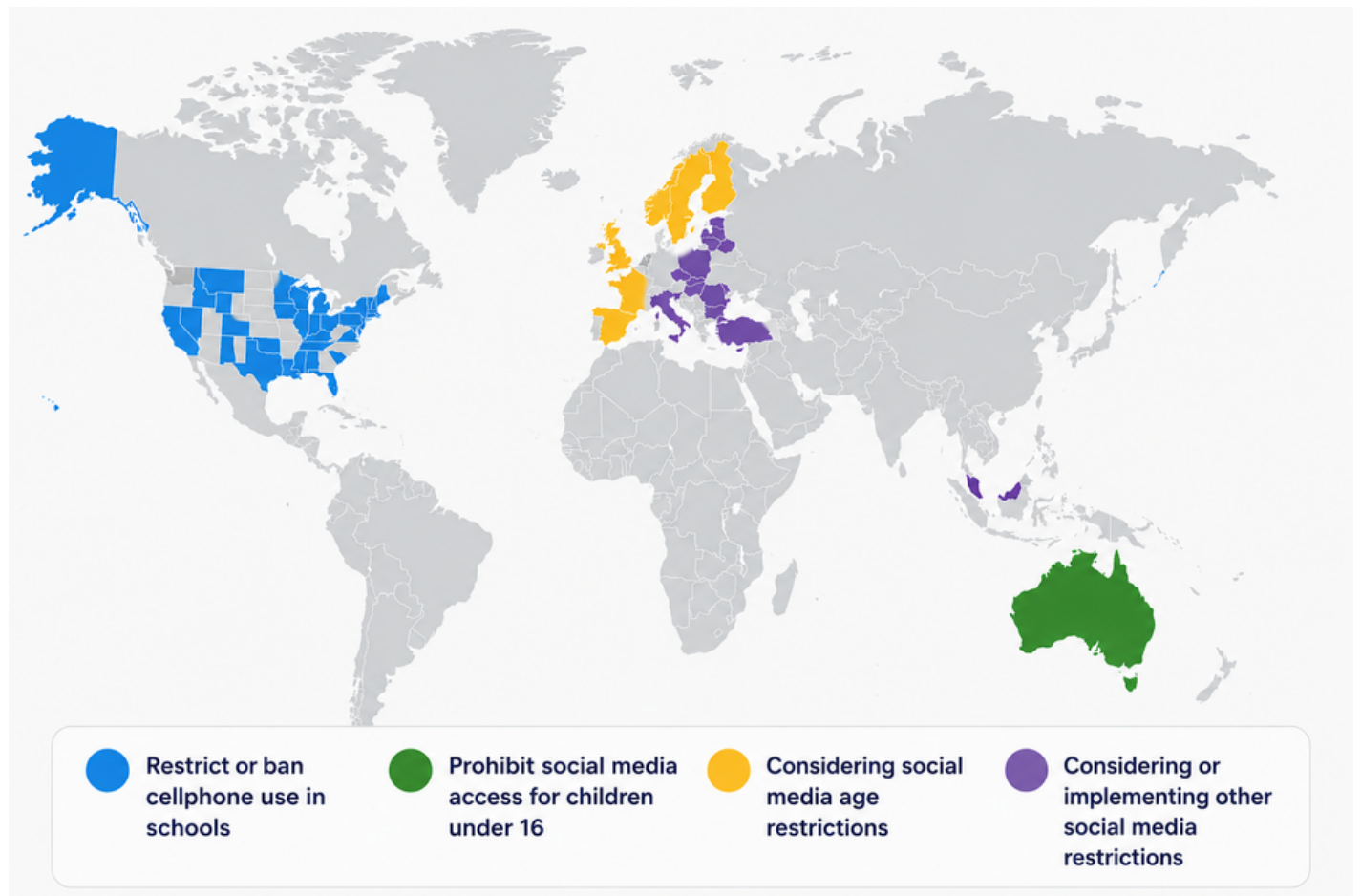
Meanwhile, schools and governments around the world are moving in the opposite direction.

Across the United States, more than 30 states now restrict or ban cellphone use during classroom instruction because educators have witnessed the damaging effects of constant digital distraction on learning and student well-being.

Internationally, concerns are growing even faster. Australia became the first nation to prohibit social media access for children under 16, and numerous countries—including Malaysia and several European nations—are considering similar restrictions. Governments are increasingly treating social media not merely as entertainment, but as a public health issue requiring safeguards.

The scientific concerns are substantial.

Researchers, including Jonathan Haidt of NYU in his best-selling book, [The Anxious Generation](#), have found associations between heavy social media use and increased rates of anxiety, depression, loneliness, sleep deprivation, cyberbullying, eating disorders, and low self-esteem, particularly among adolescents and young girls. Developing brains are especially vulnerable because social media platforms are intentionally engineered to maximize engagement through endless scrolling, notifications, algorithmic recommendations, and intermittent rewards—the same psychological mechanisms that contribute to addictive behavior.



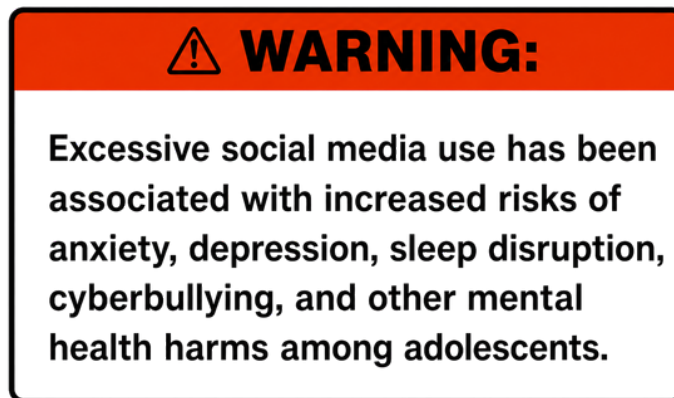
We did not ban automobiles because they cause accidents. Instead, we required seat belts, airbags, driver's licenses, and warning labels. We did not outlaw medications because they have side effects. We demanded transparency and informed consent.

Social media deserves the same approach.

Should the United States ban children under 16 from using social media, as Australia has done? That question deserves serious national debate. Critics correctly raise concerns about free speech, parental rights, privacy, and the practical difficulties of age verification.

However, even Americans who oppose outright bans should be able to agree on one modest reform: transparency.

Major social media platforms should be required to display prominent black-box warnings similar to those used for tobacco and pharmaceuticals. Such warnings could state:



Parents have a right to know.

Children have a right to know.

And technology companies that profit from capturing the attention of young users have a responsibility to disclose known risks.

History teaches us that industries often resist warnings until overwhelming evidence and public pressure force change. Tobacco companies denied the dangers of smoking. Lead manufacturers minimized the risks of lead exposure. Opioid producers underestimated addiction.

We should not repeat those mistakes with social media.

America faces a choice. We can wait decades for the damage to become undeniable, or we can act now with reasonable safeguards that place children's health above corporate profits.

At a minimum, warning labels are not censorship. They are education.

And when it comes to protecting the next generation, knowledge remains our strongest defense.



Check out my book "[Murder, Inc.: How Unregulated Industry Kills or Injures Thousands of Americans Every Year...And What You Can Do About It](#)". Available in Hardcover, Paperback, Kindle & Audiobook on Amazon now.

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