

Date of Hearing: April 17, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, TOURISM, AND  
INTERNET MEDIA

Kansen Chu, Chair

AB 2662 (Chau) – As Amended March 23, 2018

**SUBJECT:** State government: Office of Planning and Research: electronic media: child development.

**SUMMARY:** This bill would require the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to enter into appropriate arrangements with relevant state agencies to establish an independent panel of experts to study the effects of electronic media on youth and report its findings to the Legislature. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Require OPR to enter into appropriate arrangements with relevant state agencies to establish an independent panel of experts to review, synthesize, and report on research, theory, and applications in the social, behavioral, and biological sciences and to establish research priorities regarding the positive and negative roles and impacts of electronic media use, and exposure to its content and the medium on youth, as specified, in the following four areas:
  - a) The role and impact of media use and exposure in the development of children and adolescents within cognitive areas including, but not limited to, language development, executive functioning, attention problem solving skills such as the ability to conduct multiple tasks or to multitask, critical thinking, visual and spatial skills, literacy, and other learning abilities.
  - b) The impact of early technology use on developmental trajectories.
  - c) The role and impact of media use and exposure on children's and adolescents' physical development and health behaviors, including diet, exercise, sleeping and eating routines, sexual activity, access to health tools, and other areas of physical development.
  - d) The influence of media on children's and adolescents' social-emotional competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making, as well as outcomes such as depression and anxiety.
- 2) Require OPR, during the first year in which the panel is implementing these duties, to provide for the conduct of initial pilot projects to supplement and inform the panel in its work.
- 3) Require OPR to develop and implement a grant program that funds additional research determined to be necessary by the panel concerning the role and impact of electronic media in the cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development of children and adolescents.
- 4) Require the panel, on or before December 31, 2022, to prepare and submit a report or reports to the Legislature that, among other things, summarizes the empirical evidence and other results produced by the research conducted pursuant to these provisions, and makes recommendations on how scientific evidence and knowledge may be used to improve the healthy developmental and learning capacities of children and adolescents.

- 5) Contingent upon receipt by the office of \$5,000,000 in contributions for the purpose of implementing these provisions from philanthropic organizations, companies, or private donors, continuously appropriate that amount to the office for the purpose of implementing these provisions from July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2022, inclusive.
- 6) Makes various Legislative findings and declarations.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes within the Governor's Office, OPR to serve the Governor and his or her Cabinet as staff for long-range planning and research, and to constitute the comprehensive state planning agency. (Gov. Code Sec. 65040 et seq)
- 2) Requires OPR to accept and allocate or expend grants and gifts from any source, public or private, for the purpose of state planning and to undertake other planning and coordinating activities that will implement the policy and intent of the Legislature, as specified. (Gov. Code Sec. 65040 et seq.)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown. This bill has been keyed fiscal by the Legislative Council.

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) *Author and supporters statement of need for legislation:* According to the author, "In the digital technology revolution, little research has been conducted on problematic technology use and the associated negative effects on children's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. Additionally, little research has been conducted on how to use technology to support healthy development. The rapid rise of technology and digital device use among children and adolescents has created a pressing need to expand research into the health consequences of problematic technology use and possible digital addictions. This bill would require the Office of Planning and Research to enter into appropriate arrangements with relevant state agencies to establish an independent panel of experts to review, synthesize, and report on research, theory, and applications in the social, behavioral, and biological sciences and to establish research priorities regarding the positive and negative roles and impacts of electronic media use, and exposure to its content and the medium on youth.

This measure is sponsored by Common Sense Kids Action, who states in their support that, "AB 2662 would establish a program to study the role and impact of electronic media in the development of children." They point out that, "Current studies show that 98 percent of children under the age of eight have access to a mobile device, and the average amount of time children under eight years of age spend with mobile devices each day has tripled twice since 2011. ... Addressing the impact of the digital revolution on our children is critical. With little research having been conducted on problematic technology use and associated negative effects on children's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development, this bill calls for a study of these effects, as well as research on how technology can support healthy development. We are pleased to see that AB 2662 will specifically examine the role and impact of electronic media in children's and adolescents' development, and provide for a report or reports to the Legislature containing the empirical evidence and other results produced by the research funded through private grants."

- 2) *Recent studies show pervasive and growing exposure and use of media by youth, with mixed pro and con influences. Researchers call for more research.* This bill would require the Office of Planning and Research to examine the role and impact of electronic media on children's and adolescents' cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and behavioral development and provide for reports to the Legislature on their findings by December 31, 2022. It would provide the following forms of media to be within the scope of the research: Television; Motion pictures; DVDs; Interactive video games; Virtual and augmented reality; The Internet; Social media; Mobile devices and cell phones. The study would be contingent upon receipt of five million dollars (\$5,000,000) in contributions from philanthropic organizations, companies, or private donors.

Prior studies have examined the impacts of these media upon children, including a recent Policy Statement, *Children, Adolescents, and the Media*, by the American Academy of Pediatrics, (AAP). The AAP looked at the impacts of various media on the physical, emotional and educational development of children and found both good and bad, recognizing, "Media, from traditional television to the 'new media' (including cell phones, iPads, and social media), are a dominant force in children's lives. Although media are not the leading cause of any major health problem in the United States, the evidence is now clear that they can and do contribute substantially to many different risks and health problems and that children and teenagers learn from, and may be negatively influenced by, the media. However, media literacy and prosocial uses of media may enhance knowledge, connectedness, and health."

The APA found the average 8- to 10-year-old spends nearly 8 hours a day with a variety of different media, and older children and teenagers spend more than 11 hours per day. Presence of a television (TV) set in a child's bedroom increases these figures even more, and 71% of children and teenagers report having a TV in their bedroom. Young people now spend more time with media than they do in school—it is the leading activity for children and teenagers other than sleeping. "In addition to time spent with media, what has changed dramatically is the media landscape. TV remains the predominant medium but nearly one-third of TV programming is viewed on alternative platforms (computers, iPads, or cell phones). Nearly all children and teenagers have Internet access (84%), often high-speed, and one-third have access in their own bedroom. Computer time accounts for up to 1.5 hours per day; half of this is spent in social networking, playing games, or viewing videos. New technology has arrived in a big way: some 75% of 12- to 17-year-olds now own cell phones, up from 45% in 2004. Nearly all teenagers (88%) use text messaging."

"For nearly 3 decades, the AAP has expressed concerns about the amount of time that children and teenagers spend with media and about some of the content they view. In a series of policy statements, the AAP has delineated its concerns about media violence, sex in the media, substance use, music and music videos, obesity and the media, and infant media use. At the same time, existing AAP policy discusses the positive, prosocial uses of media and the need for media education in schools and at home. Shows like "Sesame Street" can help children learn numbers and letters, and the media can also teach empathy, racial and ethnic tolerance, and a whole variety of interpersonal skills. Prosocial media may also influence teenagers. Helping behaviors can increase after listening to prosocial (rather than neutral) song lyrics, and positive information about adolescent health is increasingly available through new media, including YouTube videos and campaigns that incorporate cell phone text messages." (American Academy of Pediatrics, Policy Statement: Children, Adolescents,

and the Media (2013), accessed at: file:///S:/aart/2017-18/2018/ABs/AB%202836%20(Gloria)/APA%20Kids%20and%20Media%20study.pdf)

The researchers at Princeton-Brookings, stated much the same thing – there is both positive and negative potential in media exposure - in the Introduction to their expansive compilation analysis, *The Future of Children: Children and Electronic Media*, finding that, "The main lesson learned from this volume can be captured in one phrase: 'content matters.' That is, the message is the message. Rather than focusing on the type of technology children use or even how much time children spend with media, parents and policymakers need to focus on what is being offered to children on the various media platforms."

However, as the report concludes, the researchers stressed the need for greater understanding and further study of the new technologies, noting, "Researchers have amassed a vast amount of solid information on older technologies, such as television and movies. But investigations of newer technologies and of the novel uses of existing technologies are far fewer in number and more speculative in their findings. The pervasiveness of electronic media in the lives of children makes it important for policymakers, educators, parents, and advocates to know what researchers have discovered, as well as what questions remain unanswered.

"Academic researchers have a unique opportunity to inform policymakers about the efficacy of public policy. Ultimately, societal awareness and use of media-related information and technology and the effect of the policy on media use by children and families are distinct avenues of inquiry that promise to contribute much to the discussion of whether and how media policy can contribute to the positive role of media in the developing child's life." (Princeton-Brookings, *The Future of Children: Children and Electronic Media*, Vol 18, Num. 1 (2008).)

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

Common Sense Kids Action (Sponsor)

### **Opposition**

There is no opposition on file.

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