



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU 'ĀINA O HAWAII

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**STATE OF HAWAII ANNOUNCES LEGAL ACTION AGAINST TIKTOK
FOR HARMING CHILDREN AND MISLEADING THE PUBLIC**

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HONOLULU – The state of Hawaii today announced a [lawsuit](#) against Bytedance Inc., the parent company of TikTok, alleging that the social media giant knowingly designed an addictive platform that harms users, particularly children, while misleading the public about the risks.

TikTok operates one of the world's largest social media platforms, with more than one billion users globally and over 150 million in the United States, including many in Hawaii. These users, especially children, are central to TikTok's multibillion dollar revenue model. According to the state's complaint, TikTok has deliberately exploited them for economic gain.

"The mental health and wellbeing of our keiki must come first. TikTok's design preys on their vulnerabilities, creating an environment where addiction and anxiety thrive," said Governor Josh Green. "As leaders, it's our responsibility to protect our youth from platforms that prioritize profit over their health. This lawsuit is a crucial step in holding

TikTok accountable for the harm it's causing and ensuring that our children can safely navigate the digital world."

As outlined in the complaint, TikTok's business model is built on compulsive use, structuring the platform to keep users engaged for as long as possible. Every additional minute on the platform generates more personal data and more advertising revenue for TikTok.

TikTok employs what its own employees have described as "coercive design tactics." These features are engineered to influence users' neurobiology, especially dopamine production, in ways similar to tactics used in the gambling industry, compelling users to spend as much time as possible on the platform.

The complaint alleges that these addictive techniques are especially harmful to children, who TikTok knows have limited ability to self-regulate their screen time. A substantial portion of TikTok's user base is under 18, including many under 13. TikTok has twice been sued by the U.S. government for violating the Children's Online Privacy and Protection Act (COPPA). Despite this history, TikTok fails to warn children, parents or the public about the potential risks and continues to misrepresent the nature and safety of its platform. The state is also alleging in its complaint that TikTok continues to maintain inadequate age verification and child protection systems.

"TikTok has long known about the mental health risks its platform poses, particularly on our children and young adults. At the heart of this lawsuit is a deep concern for the safety and well-being of our community. We must stand up for our families and ensure that the necessary reforms are put in place to protect our communities from exploitation," said Attorney General Anne Lopez.

The state's legal action seeks to stop TikTok from deploying harmful and deceptive practices, require meaningful safeguards for children, and ensure TikTok accurately discloses the risks associated with its platform.

The state is being represented by the law firms Starn O'Toole, Marcus and Fisher, and Keller Rohrback L.L.P, who have been appointed to serve as special deputy attorneys general in this matter.

A copy of the complaint can be found [here](#).

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