

SB 1546: Protecting Oregonians from the Risks of AI Companions

The Problem

AI “chatbot companions” are putting Oregonians at risk. Designed to simulate interaction with real people -- and do everything from role-playing to offering advice – there is mounting evidence that chatbots are contributing to anxiety, depression and even suicidality.

When a user’s mental health deteriorates, chatbot companions do *little or nothing* to connect the user with family, friends or mental health support. Instead, the algorithms that power chatbots are designed to prioritize one thing: maximum engagement, i.e., keeping the user on the hook. Because more engagement means more profit.

A [JAMA Network 2025 study](#) found that the failure of chatbots to recognize and address mental health struggle can “propagate misinformation, discourage seeking care, or even promote dangerous behaviors.”

What the Data Shows: High Risk and Growing Use

- [About 72%](#) of U.S. teens ages 13-17 have used AI companion chatbots at least once, and over half use them regularly.
- [28% of U.S. teens](#) say they use AI chatbots daily.
- [A study by Parents Together](#) found chatbots engaged in harmful conduct about once every 5 minutes in a study of over 50 hours of chatbot interactions.
- [Suicide is a leading cause of death](#) in the United States.
- [20% of teenage youth](#) have seriously considered attempting suicide (as of 2023).

Mounting Evidence of Risk to Youth from Chatbots

The [New York Times](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), and [Washington Post](#) have all joined JAMA Network in reporting on the mental health risk from chatbot companions.

[CBS’ 60 Minutes](#) recently told the stories of 13-year-old Juliana Peralta and 14-year-old Sewell Garcia.

- Juliana told a chatbot *55 times* that she was feeling suicidal – and not once did the bot connect her with mental health resources.
- The chatbot Sewell engaged with *encouraged him to take his life*.

Both Juliana and Sewell died by suicide. The company that created the chatbot Sewell engaged with recently settled a lawsuit brought by his family.

What’s Missing

Chatbots can easily detect when a user is struggling with their mental health or considering self-harm.

The problem is: they don’t do anything to get the struggling user help.

With a singular focus on engagement, the chatbot algorithms are designed to keep users engaged – not connect them to family, friends or mental health support.

The Solution: Meeting the Risk with Guardrails

Oregon can meet this risk head on with legislation that puts guardrails on chatbots to:

- Prohibit artificial companions from encouraging or promoting self-harm or suicide in any form.
- Require evidence-based systems to identify suicidal ideation or self-harm risk during user interactions.
- Establish clear, evidence-based crisis response protocols when risk is identified, including prominent, direct referral to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.
- Prevent artificial companions from discouraging users from sharing suicidal thoughts, self-harm, depression, or anxiety with trusted people.
- Require artificial companions to actively encourage connection with trusted human supports, such as family members, friends, counselors, educators, coaches, or clergy.

SB 1546 puts Oregon on the leading edge in meeting this risk – and also builds on work in eleven other states who have adopted legislation aimed at mental health protections and AI. You can read about those efforts [here](#).

Why Act Now

AI technology is advancing faster than existing safeguards and acting now can help ensure young people are supported, protected, and connected to the life-saving mental health resources they need. Oregon needs to step in *now*.

**Suicide Prevention, Mental Health and Technology & Safety Organizations are United:
We need SB 1546 !!**



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