

CONNECT X PROTECT LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT KIDS AND TEENS ONLINE IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Campaign comprised of public, private and nonprofit sectors will educate on importance of kids safety and security across the country

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Connect x Protect, a 501(c)(4) organization dedicated to advancing smart, balanced and effective policies that protect kids and teens online while safeguarding privacy and parental choice, is now active in South Carolina, with plans to expand to additional states where similar policy debates are unfolding.

The campaign is led by Executive Director Terence Samuel, an author and journalist who served as editor in chief of *USA TODAY* and executive editor of *NPR*. Terry has been a longtime observer and leading expert on the rapidly changing media landscape at both the national and local levels.

“Protecting young people online is a problem that parents can’t solve on their own. Our effort is grounded in the belief that real safety comes from holding companies accountable for responsible, transparent design — not from shifting the burden onto parents, teens, or app stores,” said Terence Samuel, C x P Executive Director. “We’ve launched this effort to ensure that policy solutions address the harmful products and design practices that put them at risk, without creating unnecessary privacy vulnerabilities for families.”

As Connect x Protect begins its work in South Carolina, a diverse group of respected parent, faith, education and community leaders are voicing support for a more balanced approach to online safety — one that strengthens protections for young people without creating new privacy risks for families.

Connect x Protect is also organizing parents, educators, and community leaders around a Declaration for a Safer Digital Future — a statement of shared principles calling on those who design and profit from online platforms to take responsibility for the environments they create. The Declaration affirms that safety and privacy are not in conflict, that no child should have to trade personal data for protection, and that solutions must work across the full digital ecosystem — not just inside mobile apps. It calls on parents to be empowered with flexible tools, not replaced by government mandates or corporate gatekeepers. Signatories can join at connectxprotect.org/sign.

"As people of faith, we believe protecting children is a shared moral responsibility," said Chad Connelly, President & Founder, Faith Wins. "The challenges facing our kids are too big for families to shoulder alone and too important to get wrong. That's why organizations like Connect x Protect are essential. They help bring parents' voices into the conversation and advocate for solutions that strengthen children's safety while honoring their dignity and privacy."

"Parents want their children to be safe online, but they don't want government or corporations stepping in as substitute parents," said Dave Wilson, former president of the Palmetto Family Council. "Families deserve solutions that respect parental authority, protect kids from real harm, and don't create new privacy risks in the process. Connect x Protect is bringing a thoughtful, balanced voice to this conversation — one that recognizes parents as partners, not bystanders."

"Parents are desperately seeking solutions to protect their children online without inadvertently exposing them to additional risk," said Tara Wood, former Chair of Charleston Moms for Liberty. "What they really need are partners who will hold industry accountable and ensure that any safety solutions truly work in the real world, facing very real threats. Connect x Protect is stepping in to fill that important role and connect families with experts and companies committed to responsible design. I'm hopeful that this will give us the chance to build protections that actually work."

The Charleston County Republican Party has endorsed Connect x Protect's [Statement of Principles for a Safer Digital Future](#), noting that "children deserve online spaces that are

as safe as they are exciting — places where they can grow without being exposed to unnecessary risks, burdensome surveillance, or harmful design choices.”

Connect x Protect brings together parents, educators, faith leaders, child safety advocates and policy experts who share a common goal: strengthening online safety for young people without sidelining families or compromising privacy. The initiative focuses on practical, evidence-informed solutions that reflect how kids and teens actually use technology — and that work across the full digital ecosystem.

In response to growing concerns from parents and teens about online harms — and confusion around proposed age assurance and verification policies — Connect x Protect will elevate community experiences and engage with lawmakers at the state and federal levels to support solutions that improve safety while protecting the privacy and security of all users.

Through education, advocacy, and public awareness efforts, Connect x Protect supports age assurance approaches that:

- Put privacy first, avoiding systems that expose kids, teens, or families to unnecessary data collection or security risks
- Empower parents, giving families control and flexibility over how and when a teen’s age information is shared

Connect x Protect will release policy briefs, host stakeholder roundtables and community events, and provide expert testimony as state legislatures and Congress consider a wide range of online safety proposals in the coming year. Resources for families and educators will also be made available as part of the initiative’s commitment to providing clear, accessible information.

For more information or to join this effort, visit www.ConnectxProtect.org.

ABOUT CONNECT X PROTECT

Connect x Protect is a broad alliance of parents, advocates, and organizations who believe young people deserve age-appropriate online spaces where they can connect safely while protecting their privacy. This campaign amplifies the voices of parents and kids to demand policymakers find solutions that protect kids online in a way that preserves privacy and makes the internet safer for everyone.

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