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Tech, Frances Haugen, and Former
Government Officials*

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
SAN JOSE DIVISION**

NETCHOICE, LLC, d/b/a NetChoice,

Plaintiff,

v.

ROB BONTA, ATTORNEY GENERAL OF
THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, in his official
capacity,

Defendant.

Case No. 5:22-cv-08861-BLF

**BRIEF OF ELECTRONIC PRIVACY
INFORMATION CENTER, RESET
TECH, FRANCES HAUGEN, AND
FORMER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS
FOR LEAVE TO SUBMIT BRIEF AS
AMICI CURIAE IN SUPPORT OF
DEFENDANT**

Hearing Date: July 27, 2023
Time: 1:30 p.m.
Judge: Hon. Beth Labson Freeman
Court: Courtroom 1, 5th Floor

Action Filed: December 14, 2022

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1 **INTEREST OF *AMICI CURIAE***¹

2 EPIC is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization established in 1994 to protect privacy,
3 freedom of expression, and democratic values in the information age. EPIC’s mission is to
4 secure the fundamental right to privacy in the digital age for all people through advocacy,
5 research, and litigation.

6 Reset Tech aims to reset the connection between media and democracy by countering
7 the threats posed by digital media monopolies. Reset develops and promotes new ideas to
8 change policy, engages with governments, supports public campaigns, and funds research to
9 promote change and offer solutions.

10 EPIC and Reset are joined on this brief by Frances Haugen, Facebook whistleblower and
11 tech expert, as well as a bipartisan group of former elected and appointed officials at both
12 federal and state level, including several from the State of California, united by a commitment
13 to find workable legislative solutions to the digital harms faced by children and young people
14 today. This bipartisan group of amici includes:

15 Hannah-Beth Jackson (CA)

- 16 • Former California State Senator and Chair of Senate Judiciary Committee.

17 Jordan Cunningham (CA)

- 18 • Former California Assembly member and joint-author of California Age Appropriate
19 Design Code Act.

20 William “Bill” Monning (CA)

- 21 • Former California State Senator.

22 Bob Wieckowski (CA)

- 23 • Former California State Senator and Assembly Judiciary Committee chair and
24 member.

25 Dick Gephardt (US)

- 26 • Former US Representative for Missouri.

27 ¹ *Amici* certify that no person or entity, other than *Amici*’s own staff or counsel, made a monetary
28 contribution to the preparation or submission of this brief or authored this brief, in whole or in
part.

1 Kerry Healey (MA)

- Former Lieutenant Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

2
3 Steve Israel (US)

- Former US Representative from New York and the Director of the nonpartisan Institute of Politics and Global Affairs at Cornell University.

4
5 Cheri Bustos (US)

- Former US Representative from Illinois.

6
7 Dan Glickman (US)

- Former US Secretary of Agriculture, former US Representative from Kansas, and former director of the Institute of Politics at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

8
9
10 Chris Shays (US)

- Former US Representative from Connecticut.

11 Linda Douglass (US)

- Former Head of Communications for Bloomberg, Senior Vice President at Atlantic Media and former Communications Director in the White House's Office of Health Reform.

12
13
14 Admiral Bill Owens

- Former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and U.S. Navy Admiral.

15
16 *Amici* believe the framework offered by the California Age Appropriate Design Code
17 (AADC), specifically addressing the risks to children that arise from the data management
18 practices of online services, including social media, is a sensible and effective means of
19 confronting tech's harmful business model. *Amici* have decades of experience evaluating state
20 and federal legislative proposals and considering the limits imposed on state law by federal
21 preemption and the Constitution, and *amici* believe the AADC's approach to tech regulation is
22 consistent with Section 230 and the First Amendment. Their ultimate interest here is ensuring
23 that the Court's judgment about the AADC is based on a wholistic understanding of how the
24 statute fits into the broader landscape of privacy and technology regulation.
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INTRODUCTION

1
2 The California Age-Appropriate Design Code (“AADC”) is a landmark piece of
3 legislation enacted to require platforms to design their services with children’s privacy in mind.
4 The law imposes certain obligations on companies that use children’s personal information to
5 profile and target them. The law does not require companies to remove or even demote any
6 specific content—as long as they do not use children’s data in a way that violates the law,
7 companies can show users whatever information they like.

8 *Amici* offer their particular expertise to counter two of the arguments Plaintiff and their
9 *amici* aim at the AADC. First, Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act does not
10 preempt or otherwise bar the law. Section 230 protects companies from publisher liability for
11 content third parties post to their platforms. It does not immunize companies from suits alleging
12 harms traceable to their own conduct. Here, because the AADC regulates platforms’ own
13 conduct—specifically, how platforms use children’s personal information—Section 230 simply
14 does not apply. How companies use personal information is the type of conduct that privacy
15 laws commonly regulate. Section 230 should not be read so broadly as to undermine privacy
16 regulation generally. Moreover, even if Section 230 provided immunity from suits under the
17 AADC, it can only be used as a defense to liability, not as a preemptive facial attack, as Plaintiff
18 attempt here.

19 Second, and relatedly, the data protection and privacy requirements in the AADC do not
20 effect an unlawful prior restraint. To the contrary, the impact assessments required by the
21 AADC are common in regulatory frameworks across the United States and the world, and
22 numerous laws incorporate similar requirements. Indeed, large online platforms and services
23 already undertake data protection assessments, which promote consumer trust. The argument
24 that generally applicable privacy regulations, targeted specifically at mitigating harms to
25 children’s privacy, are unconstitutional would undermine numerous federal and state laws and
26 undermine the state’s compelling interest in protecting the privacy of children.

ARGUMENT

I. Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act does not preempt California’s ability to regulate how platforms use children’s data, and as a matter of procedure that argument should not be considered on this posture.

Congress passed Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to protect companies from liability for the content third parties publish on their platforms. In the years since, however, internet companies have repeatedly invoked Section 230 immunity not only in suits involving publisher liability, but also in suits targeting platforms’ own conduct. Over the last twenty-five plus years, appellate courts have increasingly rejected such arguments. This Court should similarly reject Plaintiff’s invocation of Section 230 for two reasons: first, Section 230 does not preempt the AADC because it explicitly regulates platforms’ own conduct, not any third-party content. And second, Plaintiff invokes Section 230 at the wrong time—it provides a defense from liability, not an opportunity for a preemptive facial attack. For either reason, this Court should reject Plaintiff’s Section 230 arguments.

A. Section 230 does not immunize platforms in suits about their own conduct.

Plaintiff’s Complaint and Motion for Preliminary Injunction invoke the protections of Section 230 without acknowledging key limits to the statute’s application. Section 230 immunizes platforms from publisher liability for third-party content. However, when lawsuits concern harms allegedly caused by platforms’ own conduct, Section 230 does not provide immunity. Conduct that includes platforms’ own design choices—such as what data to collect, and how to use that data in designing products—falls outside of the scope of the statute. Courts of Appeals, including the Ninth Circuit, have long distinguished between liability for third-party content and platform conduct under Section 230 in cases addressing possible platform violations of federal, state, and local laws, including anti-discrimination laws, consumer protection laws, and other statutes and ordinances. Indeed, platforms themselves have begun to acknowledge

1 this, including most recently Plaintiff NetChoice’s member Google at the oral argument in
2 *Gonzalez v. Google*, currently pending at the Supreme Court.

3 Courts of Appeals have consistently refused to extend Section 230 to shield platforms
4 from liability for their own intentional conduct. Recently, this Court and the Ninth Circuit have
5 rejected Section 230 immunity when invoked by platforms in suits addressing the business
6 practices of the platforms. In *Airbnb, Inc. v. City & County of San Francisco*, 217 F. Supp. 3d
7 1066, 1073 (N.D. Cal. 2016), this Court held that an online vacation rental platform could face
8 liability for violating local ordinances prohibiting unlicensed vacation rentals. The Ninth Circuit
9 later reached the same result in a similar case. *See HomeAway.com, Inc. v. City of Santa*
10 *Monica*, 918 F.3d 676, 683 (9th Cir. 2019). In both of those cases, platform defendants could
11 not invoke Section 230 immunity because the platforms’ alleged conduct that violated the
12 ordinance was not tied to any specific third party-content—the rental listings themselves—at
13 all. The platforms had made decisions about where, how, and to whom to offer listings in ways
14 that violated local law. “[T]he vacation rental platforms did not face liability for the content of
15 their listings; rather liability arose from facilitating unlicensed booking transactions.” *Dyroff v.*
16 *Ultimate Software Group, Inc.*, 934 F.3d 1093, 1098 (9th Cir. 2019) (discussing and
17 characterizing *HomeAway.com*). Put more generally, if a platform could modify its own
18 conduct—its data practices, its design of a recommender algorithm, its user features—to comply
19 with applicable law without reference to any specific piece of third-party content, the illegality
20 comes from the platform’s choices, and Section 230 immunity does not apply.

21 Cases involving alleged violations of anti-discrimination law are particularly relevant
22 applications of this rule. In one such case, the Ninth Circuit held that a platform could not
23 invoke Section 230 immunity to defend against claims it had violated anti-discrimination law
24 when it specifically solicited racial preferences from users seeking roommates. Designing a
25 feature that uses personal information about users—such as their race or gender—to decide
26 whether to show them housing ads is “something the law prohibits” in its own right. *Fair*
27 *Housing Council v. Roommates.com*, 521 F.3d 1157, 1167 (9th Cir. 2008) (en banc). Federal
28

1 agencies agree that platforms that use information about a person’s membership in a protected
2 class to target ads in violation of anti-discrimination law do not enjoy Section 230 immunity.
3 *See, e.g., HUD. v. Facebook*, Charge of Discrimination, FHEO No. 01-18-0323-8 at 4.
4 Platforms themselves have even begun to acknowledge that such conduct is not covered by
5 Section 230. When asked whether Section 230 gives platforms immunity from anti-
6 discrimination laws, counsel for one of Plaintiff’s own members, Google, recently admitted that
7 targeting information to users based on their race “has nothing to do with the content of third-
8 party information.” *Oral argument transcript* at 128, *Gonzalez v. Google*, No. 21-1333 (U.S.),
9 *pending*. Like anti-discrimination laws, the AADC regulates how companies target information
10 to kids based on their personal information. It does not impose liability for third-party content
11 itself.

12 The Ninth Circuit has also rejected Section 230 immunity for a platform defendant
13 whose design choices caused harm to young people. In *Lemmon v. Snap*, 995 F.3d 1085 (9th
14 Cir. 2021), plaintiffs had alleged harm from “an incentive system within Snapchat that
15 encouraged its users to . . . drive at speeds exceeding 100 MPH.” *Id.* at 1092–92. While the
16 platform strenuously asserted Section 230 immunity, arguing that plaintiffs sought to hold it
17 responsible for content ultimately created and posted by third-party users, the Court rejected
18 that. *Id.* at 1094. If a plaintiff’s claim turns on whether the platform should be treated as a
19 publisher of third-party content, or whether they improperly removed third-party content, the
20 platform can get immunity—but that’s not what the *Lemmon* complaint alleged. The complaint
21 alleged a legally-cognizable injury caused by negligent design of the incentive system in the
22 platform itself. And when lawsuits allege harms caused by platforms’ own negligent design
23 choices, a platform cannot invoke Section 230 liability. *Id.* at 1091–94; *see also Erie Ins. Co. v.*
24 *Amazon.com, Inc.*, 925 F.3d 135 (4th Cir. 2019) (declining to apply Section 230 immunity in
25 suit about sale of defective goods, even though marketing copy ultimately came from third-
26 party sellers on the Amazon platform).

1 **B. Section 230 does not preempt the AADC because it regulates how platforms**
2 **use children’s data to design their services and imposes no liability for**
3 **publishing third-party content.**

4 The AADC does not treat platforms as publishers of third-party content. Like suits the
5 Ninth Circuit addressed in cases like *HomeAway*, *Roommates.com*, and *Lemmon*, the AADC
6 regulates business conduct—specifically, how companies design their services using children’s
7 data.

8 The text of the law makes this clear. The AADC applies to platforms “when designing,
9 developing, and providing [an] online service, product or feature.” Cal. Civ. Code §
10 1798.99.29(a). The statute specifically calls on platforms to evaluate “how [they use] children’s
11 personal information, and the risks of material detriment to children that arise from the data
12 management practices of the business,” *id.* § 1798.99.31(a)(1)(B), and refers to platform design
13 in many ways including the “design elements,” § 1798.99.30(b)(4)(E), “the design of the online
14 product,” § 1798.99.31(a)(1)(B)(i)-(iv), “algorithms used by the online product,” § 1798.99.31
15 (a)(1)(B)(v), and “system design features,” § 1798.99.31 (a)(1)(B)(vii). The prescriptive
16 sections of the AADC reflect this too, focusing on platform design choices fully within platform
17 control and far from the heartland of Section 230 immunity. *See* §§ 1798.99.31(a)(2) (requiring
18 companies to create plans to mitigate risks created by their use of children’s personal
19 information); 1798.99.31(a)(3)–(4) (requiring certain disclosures to the Attorney General);
20 1798.99.31(a)(5) (requiring companies to estimate the age of child users); 1798.99.31(a)(6)
21 (setting requirements for default privacy settings); 1798.99.31(a)(7) (requiring disclosure of
22 privacy information); 1798.99.31(a)(8) (requiring companies inform children if they are being
23 tracked by parents); 1798.99.31(a)(9) (calling for enforcement of platform’s own terms);
24 1798.99.31(a)(10) (requiring a contact tool); 1798.99.31(b)(i)–(ii) (prohibiting other platform
25 data practices).

26 A platform would not have to remove or even demote any content to comply with these
27 requirements. Platforms could show users whatever content they like—as long as the companies
28 ensure that that they are not using children’s data to target information to them in violation of

1 the law. Indeed, a company that does not use kids’ data to target content cannot violate the key
2 provisions of the law regardless of whether the content could cause harm to kids. Thus, like the
3 examples discussed in the previous section, the AADC does not impose liability for third-party
4 content—it holds platforms liable for their own conduct.

5 The purposes of the AADC further show that the law imposes liability based on platform
6 conduct—how a platform uses kids’ data to target information—and not on what content the
7 platform shows children. The AADC, like many business regulations across economic sectors,
8 seeks to address market incentives that the legislature believes currently encourage businesses
9 to design and produce harmful products. *See id.* § 1798.99.29(b) (discussing “conflict . . .
10 between commercial interests and the best interests of children”). California’s motivation to
11 enact the AADC tracks with governments’ motivation to regulate businesses’ *conduct* across
12 economic sectors. Many business regulations address negative externalities, or situations where
13 businesses make money but cause harm to or impose costs on communities or the public while
14 doing so. And as the statute notes here, online platforms react to business incentives in ways
15 that undermine privacy rights. *See Findings Section at (b)–(d)*. Platforms have built-in profit
16 incentives to optimize their internal platform designs not to protect privacy—of children or
17 adults—but to promote engagement. *See, e.g., Gilad Edelman, How Facebook Could Break*
18 *Free From the Engagement Trap*, *Wired* (Nov. 19, 2021), [https://www.wired.com/story/jeff-](https://www.wired.com/story/jeff-allen-interview-facebook-engagement-trap/)
19 [allen-interview-facebook-engagement-trap/](https://www.wired.com/story/jeff-allen-interview-facebook-engagement-trap/). This is because users who spend more time on a
20 platform see more ads, which helps platforms make money. Understandably, under current
21 incentives, platforms make design choices to prioritize content that prompts people to engage
22 and spend more time on the platform. *See generally Allen, Jeff, Social Media and the Spread of*
23 *Harmful Content*, Grand Rounds in the Oakland Department of Psychiatry, 22 June 2022,
24 Oakland CA (virtual),
25 [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/614cbb3258c5c87026497577/t/6389125816e7a1745103a0](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/614cbb3258c5c87026497577/t/6389125816e7a1745103a09c/1669927516632/Social+Media+and+the+Spread+of+Harmful+Content.pdf)
26 [9c/1669927516632/Social+Media+and+the+Spread+of+Harmful+Content.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/614cbb3258c5c87026497577/t/6389125816e7a1745103a09c/1669927516632/Social+Media+and+the+Spread+of+Harmful+Content.pdf). And as the head
27 of one of Plaintiff’s members has previously explained, the closer content grows to violating
28

1 policies against incitement to violence, promotion of self-harm, or misinformation, the more
2 users engage. *See* Mark Zuckerberg, *A Blueprint for Content Governance and Enforcement*,
3 Facebook (last edited May 5, 2021), <http://www.facebook.com/notes/751449002072082/>. When
4 this kind of content is targeted at a child based on information the company has collected about
5 the child and inferences the company has made from that information, the harmful effect is
6 especially acute. It is this specific harm that the AADC protects against.

7 Section 230 prohibits holding platforms liable for specific content posted by third
8 parties. But Section 230 does not prevent California from regulating the incentives and business
9 practices of the platforms, including platforms' incentive to use a child's personal data to entice
10 them to stay on the platform. The Court should reject arguments that Section 230 preempts the
11 AADC.

12 **C. Even if Section 230 properly applied here, Plaintiff's invocation comes at an**
13 **inappropriate time.**

14 This Court should reject Plaintiff's proposed application of Section 230 for an entirely
15 separate reason: it does not presently, and may never, face civil liability from which Section 230
16 provides immunity.

17 Section 230 protects platforms from a "cause of action" that "may be brought" under a
18 state law that is "inconsistent" with the provision. 42 U.S.C. § 230(e)(3). Section 230 provides a
19 defense to lawsuits; it does not provide the basis for facial challenges to statutes or regulations.
20 Indeed, courts often hesitate to apply Section 230 immunity at even the pleading stage unless
21 application of "the statute's barrier to suit is evident from the face of the complaint." *Marshall's*
22 *Locksmith v. Google, LLC*, 925 F.3d 1263, 1267 (D.C. Cir. 2019).

23 Here, Plaintiff does not allege—nor could it—that any actions under the AADC are
24 threatened or imminent, or even that they are likely to happen at all. While part of the AADC
25 allows for the California Attorney General, alone, to seek civil penalties for certain violations,
26 *see* Cal. Civil Code § 1798.99.35(a), any such suits cannot be brought as yet to any current
27 online service, product, or feature. *See id.* § 1798.99.33(b). Plaintiff speculates not only that
28

1 Defendant will imminently bring such actions, but that such actions would apply the law in
2 ways inconsistent with Section 230. None of those things are clear. Under the circumstances,
3 this Court should decline to apply Section 230 at this juncture.

4 **II. Data protection impact requirements do not effect an unlawful prior restraint on**
5 **platforms.**

6 This is a case about a privacy statute that applies tools commonly used in global data
7 protection frameworks to address harmful business practices targeted at children. This is not a
8 case about censorship or speech restrictions for similar reasons to why the AADC does not
9 regulate third-party content. The focus of the statute is on the assessment and mitigation of risks
10 caused by business' collection and use of children's personal data. Merely requiring a company
11 to assess and mitigate the risks of harmful data processing is not an unconstitutional prior
12 restraint. If the Court were to hold that the AADC framework violates the First Amendment, it
13 could undermine a wide range of state and federal privacy laws and raise concerns about
14 international data protection frameworks as well.

15 Companies have tried for decades to argue that privacy laws violate their First
16 Amendment rights. But despite their efforts, courts have generally upheld privacy regulations at
17 the state and federal level where they do not inhibit public discussions on matters of public
18 concern. *See* Neil M. Richards, *Reconciling Data Privacy and the First Amendment*, 52 UCLA
19 L. Rev. 1149, 1155 (2005); Neil M. Richards, *Why Data Protection Law is (Mostly)*
20 *Constitutional*, 56 WM. & MARY L. REV. 1501, 1505 (2015). Indeed, most privacy law
21 provisions are common business regulations that should be subject to simple rational basis
22 review and easily pass constitutional muster. *See* Richards, *Reconciling Data Privacy, supra*, at
23 117374. And courts have also gone further to uphold privacy statutes that directly limit the
24 transfer, sale, and even collection of personal information; these statutes impose a much more
25 direct burden on speech than the impact assessment requirements in the AADC. *See, e.g., NCTA*
26 *v. FCC*, 555 F.3d 996 (D.C. Cir. 2009) (affirming FCC regulations applying privacy regulations
27 concerning the collection of consumer proprietary network information under 47 U.S.C. § 222);
28

1 *TransUnion v. FTC*, 267 F.3d 1138, 1142 (D.C. Cir. 2001) (upholding the Fair Credit Reporting
2 Act ban on target marketing lists). It is not surprising that many other state and federal privacy
3 laws have stood for decades without a significant First Amendment challenge. *See, e.g.*, 47
4 U.S.C. § 551 (Cable Subscriber Privacy Provisions), 18 U.S.C. § 2710 (Video Privacy
5 Protection Act), Cal. Penal Code § 630 (California Invasion of Privacy Act), 201 Code of Mass.
6 Reg. 17.00. Even when evaluated under the stricter *Central Hudson* test, these laws “directly
7 advance” the “substantial” governmental interest in protecting the privacy and security of
8 personal information and thus clearly satisfy the standards set forth in *Central Hudson Gas
9 Electric Corporation v. Public Service Commission of New York*, 447 U.S. 557 (1980). *See*
10 *NCTA v. FCC*, 555 F.3d at 998; *see also Sorrell v. IMS Health Inc.*, 564 U.S. 552, 596 (2011)
11 (Breyer, J., dissenting) (citing *DOJ v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of Press*, 489 U.S. 749,
12 762–771 (1989)); Daniel J. Solove, *A Taxonomy of Privacy*, 154 U. PA. L. REV. 477, 520–22
13 (2006).

14 The AADC is on even stronger constitutional footing than other privacy laws that have
15 been in force for decades. The law not only directly advances the government’s substantial
16 interest in protecting the privacy of personal information, but also directly advances the
17 government’s substantial interest in preventing or mitigating harms to children. And the impact
18 assessments that the AADC requires are commonplace risk mitigation mechanisms that are
19 already being used by large companies and are being integrated into major global privacy
20 frameworks. Ruling that the AADC’s impact assessment requirements violate the First
21 Amendment would pose an existential threat to nearly all privacy regulations in the United
22 States.

23 **A. The AADC imposes data protection requirements specifically tailored to
24 ensure businesses mitigate harmful data practices that impact children.**

25 Most privacy and data protection laws require companies to conduct Data Protection
26 Impact Assessments (DPIAs) on certain data processing activities, particularly if those activities
27 may include large-scale, high-risk, or sensitive data processing. *See, e.g.*, Cal. Civ. Code §
28

1 1798.185(a)(15)(B); Col. Rev. Stat. § 6-1-1309(2)(a)-(c); European Union Regulation 2016/679
2 (General Data Protection Regulation) Art. 35; Brazil Lei Geral de Proteção de Dados (LGPD)
3 Art. 38. These DPIAs are important tools used to evaluate data processing activities, typically
4 including the scope and purpose of data processing and potential risks to the data subjects. *See,*
5 *e.g.*, General Data Protection Regulation Article 35; Cal. Civ. Code §1798.185(a)(15)(B); Col.
6 Rev. Stat. § 6-1-1309(2)(a)-(c). These assessments ultimately focus on commercial conduct, a
7 business’s policies and practices for collecting, using, storing, and transferring personal data,
8 and not on traditionally expressive conduct.

9 The DPIAs required by the AADC are specifically tailored to assess “the purpose of the
10 online service, product, or feature, how it uses children’s personal information, and the risks of
11 material detriment to children that arise from the data management practices of the business.”
12 Cal. Civ. Code § 1798.99.31(a)(1)(B). Additional items that the applicable business must
13 address in the assessment include potential harms stemming from the design of the product,
14 service, or feature, algorithms used in the product, service, or feature, targeted advertising
15 systems used by the product, service, or feature, and sensitive data processing. Cal. Civ. Code §
16 1798.99.31(a)(1)(B)(i-viii). These requirements are not directed at specific speech or expressive
17 conduct. The only mention of “content” in the statute is in the list of considerations for
18 businesses conducting the assessments, and even there it is the design of the system that must be
19 evaluated, not the content itself. Cal. Civ. Code § 1798.99.31(a)(1)(B)(i).

20 The AADC establishes an audit and assessment process that requires businesses to
21 evaluate risks that their services and data collection systems could pose to children. The law sets
22 forth what questions must be asked but does not presuppose the answers to those questions. And
23 if a risk is revealed in the course of conducting the DPIA, the practice is not automatically
24 prohibited—the business is tasked with creating a plan to mitigate or eliminate the risk
25 generated by the processing activity. Cal. Civ. Code § 1798.99.31(a)(2). Again, this requirement
26 does not mandate a specific action (or require “self-censorship”) but encourages businesses to
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1 improve the design of their processing activity to lessen risks to data subjects. *Id.* It is left up to
2 the business how and to what extent the risk will be mitigated or eliminated.

3 Even the mitigation requirement of the AADC will only apply in a narrow range of cases
4 where a business finds a “risk of material detriment to children that arises from the data
5 management practices of the business identified in the Data Protection Impact Assessment.” *Id.*
6 Indeed, the only prohibitions in the statute are prohibitions on use, collection, or transfer of
7 children’s personal information. Cal. Civ. Code § 1798.99.31(b).

8 **B. Data protection impact assessments are already commonplace for large**
9 **online services and have long been integrated into global privacy**
10 **frameworks and standards.**

11 This challenge to the use of DPIAs does not occur in a vacuum. DPIAs are a routine and
12 common data protection tool in privacy legislation both within the U.S. and globally. Several
13 U.S. state laws require in-scope businesses to complete DPIAs for existing and new processing
14 activities. *See, e.g.*, Cal. Civ. Code § 1798.185(a)(15)(B); Va. Code Ann. § 59.1-576(A)(1-5);
15 Col. Rev. Stat. § 6-1-1309(2)(a)-(c); Conn. Gen. Stat. Chapter 743jj § 42-552. Internationally,
16 privacy and data security laws frequently mandate regular DPIAs. *See, e.g.*, General Data
17 Protection Regulation Art. 35; United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation Art. 35;
18 Brazil LGPD Art. 38; Abu Dhabi Global Market Data Protection Regulations 2021 Section 34;
19 Mauritius Data Protection Act 2017 Section 34; South Africa Protection of Personal
20 Information Act Section 4(b).

21 As recognized by many of these regulations and accompanying guidance, DPIAs are
22 essential privacy tools that aid the applicable business in demonstrating compliance with legal
23 obligations, assessing data collection and processing practices, and identifying risks. *See, e.g.*,
24 United Kingdom Information Commissioner’s Office Data Protection Impact Assessments
25 Guidance; General Data Protection Regulation Art. 35 and Recital 90. By requiring businesses
26 to carefully evaluate the structure, necessity, and impact of a processing activity prior to
27 deployment, DPIAs put into action key privacy principles, including accountability, data
28 minimization, and privacy by design. *See* United Kingdom Information Commissioner’s Office

1 Data Protection Impact Assessments Guidance. Consistent DPIA use trains staff involved in
2 designing projects to consider privacy in early stages, which both produces better privacy
3 outcomes and prevents the business from wasting time and resources on shutting down or fixing
4 ill-considered, harmful, or non-compliant practices after they are already in use.

5 These assessments are also critical tools for both enforcement bodies and businesses in
6 enforcement proceedings. Enforcement authorities often review DPIAs as part of an
7 enforcement investigation, particularly as a method of confirming whether businesses have
8 made appropriate effort to comply with applicable regulations. On the business side, DPIAs
9 allow businesses to “show their work” and prove to authorities that businesses are aware of their
10 privacy obligations and carefully considering them in every stage of service, product, or feature
11 development.

12 A business can also publish the assessments to promote consumer trust. In the event that
13 a problem arises, businesses can point to DPIAs to demonstrate that they have carefully
14 considered consumer interests and attempted to reduce or remove negative impacts as much as
15 possible. DPIAs also may allow consumers to better understand how and why their information
16 is being used.

17 DPIAs are a key privacy compliance and assessment tool internationally and an integral
18 component of many privacy compliance and enforcement regimes. Invalidating this tool poses a
19 threat to U.S. and international privacy rights and would put California out of step with privacy
20 regulations throughout the U.S. and the world.

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CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, *Amici* ask this Court to deny Plaintiff’s request for a preliminary injunction.

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Respectfully submitted,

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