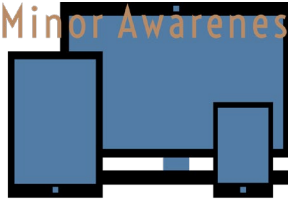


# Matthew E. Minor Awareness Foundation



Putting Children's Safety on Social Media, First

## Talking Points:

Senate Judiciary Committee Meeting-Capitol Hill, Washington D.C. Dec 7<sup>th</sup> @ 11:30am



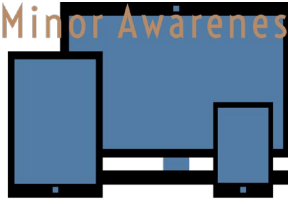
Our son, Matthew Emmanuel Minor (Matt), was a very loving & compassionate child. He was a big hugger. Matthew had a very charismatic & loving personality and had a wonderful smile that would light up the room. Matthew was active in martial arts, football, and basketball. He cherished his time at our family gatherings, especially those at the family farm in Tappahannock, Virginia. Matthew mentioned several times wanting to serve his country by joining the military like his father and grandfather—a family tradition. Matt was considered an "ambassador" of Accokeek Academy, where he attended school. He showed the new kids where their classes were and defended them against anyone picking on them. Also, instinctively, Matt was active in his church, academy, and the local community. At the tender age of 12, he understood you can show no greater care for someone than protecting others.

On the evening of March 7<sup>th</sup>, our world was devastated and forever changed by our son TJ pleading to us to come upstairs and that something terrible had happened to Matthew. Although my wife Mia was starting new treatments for multiple sclerosis, and I was recovering from a recent surgery to remove cancer that subsequently resulted in a leg injury, rendering me unable to walk, the adrenaline kicked in, and I was immediately running upstairs without my walker to check on Matt.



My military training kicked in, and I started assessing the situation. Matt had something tied around his neck. Why was that there? Find out later, I told myself. I removed the cord, and I began CPR. Mia called 911,. While doing this, we asked the almighty why this was happening and to take us instead; he was only 12. I continued to perform CPR until the EMTs showed up. Around 2:30 am at the hospital, the doctor came in and notified us that Matthew died. It was unbelievable and shocking; we had just eaten dinner.

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While speaking with the police detective, we discovered the choking challenge or the "blackout" challenge that kids were participating in on YouTube and TikTok.



This fact was also supported by talking with children who confirmed Matt was participating in the choking challenge at Matt's tribute service the day before his funeral. What are these social media challenges? We asked ourselves, what can we do about it?

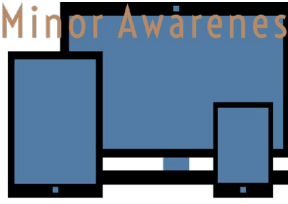


With the support of our Pastors at Victory Church, our family (T.J., Momma Ruth, Tiffany, Jonathan, Tray and John), extended family, and fellow parents and community, we created the Matthew E. Minor Awareness Foundation to bring awareness about the hidden dangers of the internet to our children and teens, such as cyberbullying, self-harm, cyberdares, i.e. (Knock-out challenges/ Blackout Challenge) and helping families cope with grief after losing a loved one. We have also established a college scholarship fund for local college-bound students in the D.C., MD, and V.A. areas to further their future educational goals. We aspire to make this a national scholarship in due time.



While advocating for children's online safety, we partnered with other non-profit organizations such as Fair Play for Kids, Parents Together, and the Five Rights Foundation. We have representatives here today. Additionally, we learned about the Maryland Age Appropriate Design Code legislation currently before the state legislature in Maryland. We met to show support for this legislation and discuss it with one of the bill's co-sponsors, Delegate Jared Solomon and Jared is also here with us today.

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The Maryland Age-Appropriate Design Code Bill would require tech companies to prioritize the safety of children – instead of profits. There is a similar law in place in the United Kingdom that



has led to an immediate change for kids in the U.K. — including TikTok turning off strangers' ability to message kids, Google turning on Safe Search by default, and YouTube disabling autoplay by default for users under the age of 18.

Our children in Maryland and the U.S. don't have these protections yet, but the Age-Appropriate Design Code could help to change that. Also, if there is a plan to put in place an age-appropriate design code bill in Illinois, we would support that effort.



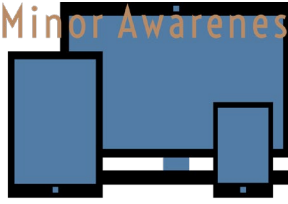
- **If laws such as KOSA were in place, would this tragedy have happened to our family?**
- **We ask you to support and pass the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA), so this does not happen to other children and families.**

**Referencing Fair Play's Memo, dated November 15th and titled "America Wants the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA),"**

- Huge bi-partisan majorities support passing laws to put safeguards in place.
- 87% of voters nationwide supported passing laws to address the problem (55% strongly).
- Again, support transcends all demographics, with almost universal support among all groups.
- Additionally, support among parents with kids under 18 at home is at 91%.
- Importantly, only 9% of all voters opposed this kind of action and even then, just 2% strongly opposed.

- ***It's time for us to do something.***

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## Our takeaways from today's meeting:

- Continue to advocate to have KOSA brought to the floor for a vote with the Senate.
- Continue grassroots efforts to have additional states put bills similar to Maryland's Age-appropriate design code in place.
- Work with our partners to increase awareness about the proposed online child safety legislation at the state and federal levels.