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**Utah sues Meta for child addiction harm and deceiving parents
about dangers of Facebook and Instagram**

SALT LAKE CITY (Oct. 24, 2023) – Utah Gov. Spencer J. Cox and Attorney General Sean D. Reyes today announced a lawsuit against Meta Platforms, Inc. and its subsidiary Instagram, LLC, over their flagship social media products, Facebook and Instagram. The state alleges that the social media giant has violated the Utah Consumer Sales Practices Act by designing the platforms to trap children in excessive, harmful use that causes serious mental health issues. Meta also deceived parents and young users about the safety of using Instagram and Facebook.

The complaint, filed in state court, comes on the heels of a years-long multistate investigation by a bipartisan group of 42 State Attorneys General into Meta, culminating in nationwide filings today. In the Utah complaint, the Utah Department of Commerce's Division of Consumer Protection alleges that Meta intentionally crafted products that bombard children with slot-machine-like functionalities, night-and-day alerts, and predatory features that coalesce into a perfect storm for excessive use. The suit also details how Meta's refinement of these practices

and its rise in market domination has closely tracked with an alarming rise in the rates of adverse mental health symptoms among Utah children.

As alleged in the complaint, the unlawful business practices detailed in Utah's filing are driven by Meta's business model, which is premised on luring young users into extended use of its platforms so that the company can siphon important data and attention, all while targeting revenue-generating ads as precisely as possible. The complaint builds on information leaked to *The Wall Street Journal* in September 2021 that showed that Meta put "profits over safety" and that the company has known for years that its business practices were negatively impacting the health and well-being of young users. These documents, as well as the information obtained through the state's investigation, starkly contrast to the misleading public reports Meta published, touting low rates of negative and harmful experiences and promising safety and security, particularly for young users.

The suit marks the second recent lawsuit against a major social media company by the Division of Consumer Protection.

"Just as litigation effectively spurred change by the opioid pharmaceutical industry and Big Tobacco, we expect this lawsuit will inspire Meta to improve its child safety practices," Gov. Cox said. "Regulating social media companies to protect minors is not a partisan issue, and most people across the political spectrum agree we cannot allow addictive algorithms and deceptive practices to continue harming our children. This action shows we will continue to fight for the mental health and well-being of our kids."

"Every burgeoning industry has a moment where they have to recognize the power they possess," said Attorney General Sean D. Reyes. "We are now seeing a generation that hasn't known life without Meta's products. With that growth comes a responsibility to protect our values and communities, particularly our kids. This lawsuit is a first step towards putting guardrails around a company that is in our homes, our schools, and our neighborhoods. I invite Meta to the table to right past wrongs and to take meaningful steps forward."

The filing today brings two separate counts, alleging that:

- Meta has, for years, carefully crafted a highly sophisticated platform to ensure that it effectively captured young children in harmful cycles of excessive use through deceptive and addictive features, all of which constitutes an unconscionable business practice under state law.

- While attempting to maintain a public image as a stalwart of child well-being, Meta deceived parents and consumers about the risks of the platform and its attempts to ensnare our children's attention and experience.

With its law enforcement partners across the country, Utah seeks to finally hold Meta accountable for these alleged illegal acts and bring about meaningful changes to the company's business practices. The complaint also asks the court to impose a penalty and other relief to ensure that Meta and other companies understand the significant consequences of targeting our youth.

The Division of Consumer Protection and the Office of the Attorney General continue investigating other social media platforms for similar conduct.

Filing is attached.

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