



FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

## Congress of the United States House of Representatives

January 28, 2009

Dear Colleague,

Everyday children and teens alike rely on the internet for multiple resources. Whether it's research for a school project, visiting an online social network, or checking movie times for a local theater, our nation's youth remains increasingly active online and it is paramount that they are aware of the potential risks of online predators and know how to stay safe online.

While many parents continue to educate their children about the importance of online safety, this is an important message that our schools should have the ability to reinforce as well. Currently, school districts that receive grants under the Enhancing Education through Technology (Ed Tech) Program and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Program from the U.S. Department of Education may use the federal funds for a wide variety of authorized activities, such as drug and violence prevention activities, establishing and maintaining a school safety hotline, or developing, enhancing, or implementing information technology courses.

The Student Internet Safety Act would expand the list of authorized activities allowing schools to develop and implement programs that promote the safe use of the Internet by students, such as programs that a) educate students about appropriate online behavior, including interacting with individuals on social networking Web sites and in chat rooms; b) protect students against online predators, cyberbullying, or unwanted exposure to inappropriate material; or c) promote involvement by parents in the use of the Internet by their children.

According to a 2007 study by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children:

- 69% of teens regularly receive personal messages online from people they don't know.
- 31% of teens say they usually reply and chat with people they don't know, and only 21% tell a trusted adult when they receive such messages.
- 64% post photos or videos of themselves, while 58% post info about where they live.
- 71% of teens have established online profiles, up from 61% in 2006.
- 19% of teens report they have been harassed or bullied online.

Given the vital role the Internet plays in schools across the nation, the Student Internet Safety Act would give schools the ability to educate their students about staying safe in a rapidly growing online community.

I hope you will consider co-sponsoring this important legislation. If you have any questions or would like to become a cosponsor of the Student Internet Safety Act, please contact Brooke McKnight at 5-1252 or [brooke.mcknight@mail.house.gov](mailto:brooke.mcknight@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Adam H. Putnam".

Adam H. Putnam  
Member of Congress