![fairplay — childhood beyond brands]

April 1, 2026

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Google LLC, D/B/A YouTube
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San Bruno, CA 94066

Re: AI-Generated Content for Kids

Mr. Pichai and Mr. Mohan:

We are writing to express serious concern about the proliferation of AI-generated videos on YouTube and YouTube Kids. This "AI slop" harms children's development by distorting their sense of reality, overwhelming their learning processes, and hijacking their attention, thereby extending time online and displacing offline activities necessary for their healthy development. These harms are particularly acute for young children.

As a coalition of child development, consumer, and online safety advocates, we urge you to make significant changes to the ways in which AI-generated content is displayed and distributed on YouTube and YouTube Kids, including Shorts. These changes should include the following:

1. Clearly labeling all AI-generated content on YouTube.
2. Prohibiting AI-generated content from being hosted on YouTube Kids.
3. Prohibiting child-directed videos ("Made for Kids") that are AI-generated from being hosted on the main YouTube platform.
4. Prohibiting algorithmic recommendations of AI-generated content to users under age 18.
5. Implementing a toggle switch in parental controls so that parents can turn off AI-generated content even if children search for it. This switch should be off by default.
6. Halting all investment in the creation of AI-generated videos for children.

YouTube and Youtube Kids reach millions of minors daily, ranging from infants to teenagers.[1] The most likely viewers of YouTube and YouTube Kids are those from families with low educational attainment and low socioeconomic status, indicating that these populations may be the most deeply impacted by YouTube's practices. The most popular content is child-directed – 4 out of 5 of the top videos on YouTube (each with view counts in the billions) are aimed at kids and families.

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[1] 85% of children under 12 use YouTube daily. Almost three-quarters of families with children under 6 use YouTube or YouTube kids daily; teens similarly use YouTube, with around 70% using it daily.

A significant portion of YouTube and YouTube Kids videos incorporate AI-generated content, such as visuals, audio, and narratives. Despite promises to keep kids safe, the proliferation of AI slop content demonstrates once again that YouTube prioritizes profit over the well-being of its most vulnerable users. In fact, multiple content creators brag about earning millions off of plotless, mesmerizing AI content for young children, and the top-watched AI slop channels targeting kids have earned over $4.25 million in revenue annually so far.

Even children who do not seek out AI slop may be exposed to it. YouTube's algorithm consistently recommends these videos to kids on YouTube and YouTube Kids, making it impossible for them to avoid. A recent investigation by *The New York Times* found that after watching popular preschool shows like Cocomelon on YouTube, 40% of the recommended videos that followed contained AI-generated content. Kids of all ages are impacted – about 21% of all new users' recommended Shorts contained AI slop. A 2023 BBC investigation found that false science information from AI videos on YouTube were being recommended to older kids as "educational." And even after "Elsagate" in 2017, young people are still targeted with disturbing or inappropriate videos, including those that feature their favorite characters or animals engaging in sexual or violent activities. A 2025 *WIRED* investigation found that channels with names similar to "Cute Cat" were rife with videos of AI-generated cats being brutally tortured.[2]

The potential consequences of forcing AI content on children are varied, and there is much we don't know about the consequences of AI content for children. Regardless, it has proliferated rapidly without any research or regulation. YouTube is participating in this uncontrolled experiment by pushing AI-generated content without research demonstrating its benefits and without acknowledging the child development principles that tell us it's likely mostly harmful. And what research does exist, along with what we know about child development, suggest that these AI videos are already having profound impacts on children right now.

AI content can impact children's understanding of fact versus fiction. Even adults only have a 50-50 shot at correctly identifying when something is created by AI; in another study, linguistics experts were wrong about AI 62% of the time. What's more, when we are repeatedly exposed to AI claims or imagery, we are more likely to think they're real, even when we are told explicitly that they're fake. Children's understanding of reality is exponentially impacted by AI exposure. Young children are naturally trusting and are likely to believe the things they see at face value. In early childhood, children's brains are being wired for the first time. This means that, as development psychologist McCall Booth told *The Times,* children repeatedly exposed to AI slop *"may have a harder time in the future identifying fake content because their mental schema had already adapted to include improbable, but aesthetically realistic character actions."* Even as children age and become more discerning, they are still developing their critical thinking skills into adulthood, making consistent AI identification nearly impossible.

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[2] Many of these channels, though not labeled Made for Kids, were intentionally directed at children. From *Wired,* "The metadata for several channels revealed some videos have been tagged with keywords such as #funnycat, #familyfun, and #disneyanimatedmovies. Others featuring polar bears and reindeer infected with parasites are tagged with terms like #animalrescue, suggesting an attempt to appear alongside more educational content."

In addition to distorting their sense of reality, watching AI-generated content can negatively impact children's cognitive development. With AI slop, kids' brains will naturally try to decipher the truth or meaning behind the content. But due to the nonsensical nature of this content, it can actually overwhelm their brains or cause cognitive overload, complicating how children process information and displacing time and space for them to learn things they actually need to learn. What's more, many AI videos are labeled as educational, though studies have shown that only about 5% of YouTube videos labeled as educational actually contain high-quality educational content. Even when families do select thoughtfully produced, human-created content that may be genuinely educational, AI content is just a few recommendations away.

AI-generated videos also displace necessary activities that aid children in their development across all domains. So much of the content (AI or not) on YouTube and YouTube Kids is designed to hijack children's time and attention. The more a video can mesmerize a child, the longer they will watch. Creators know that a fast pace, bright colors, kid-friendly voices, and clickbait titles work to grab the attention of young viewers. Some YouTube videos play 10+ hour livestreams containing zombifying animations, designed for parents to be able to plop even infants in front of to keep them entranced. While no content designed to hijack children's attention is acceptable, AI is unique because it can be generated in mass quantities very quickly and therefore can override the algorithmic recommendations so that such videos are more easily accessed by viewers. The fact that so many of these videos are bizarre, plotless, or disturbing provides evidence that creators are seeking to hijack attention, not entertain or educate.

When these videos glue children to a screen, children are deprived of the play, sleep, and social interactions that they need for social, emotional, cognitive, language, and physical development. The potential harms go beyond developmental delays – increased screen time is associated with increased frequencies of tantrums, sensory-processing issues, and sedentary behavior. Excessive screen use can also negatively impact behavior and mental health, as well as cognitive skills like problem-solving and impulse control.

Currently, YouTube requires its creators to voluntarily label "altered and synthetic content." So far, this system has failed to hold creators accountable and prevent unsafe content from getting to kids. The definition of "altered and synthetic content" is extremely limited, meaning that creators are not required to disclose most AI-generated content. A bizarre video where animals dive into pools would not need a disclosure, nor would an "educational" video where animated children brush their teeth with toothbrushes made of teeth. It's no surprise then that those disclosures appear infrequently. *The New York Times* reported that the "altered and synthetic content" label was rarely used. In Fairplay's investigation, even if a video has "AI" in its title, it is unlikely to be labeled "altered and synthetic." What's more, no such label exists on YouTube Kids, even though AI-generated videos are clearly on the platform. If videos are labeled on the main YouTube platform, the "altered and synthetic content" labels are only visible if viewers open and scroll through the videos' lengthy descriptions. The phrase "altered and synthetic content" is also unlikely to be understood by the preliterate children who are targets for much of this AI slop and aren't even able to read the disclosures.

We offer this description of Google's current policies and practices to demonstrate how insufficient the company's response has been so far to the proliferation of AI content targeting children. But we must be clear: disclosures for children are not enough. Google should take the steps outlined above to ensure these videos do not reach children in the first place, rather than relying on young children to fend for themselves or their parents to play whack-a-mole.

We know that Google has the capability to delete dangerous videos at volume; during the Elsagate controversy, Google deleted 150,000 videos and suspended 270 accounts. Google already has the technology to detect AI in many forms, but despite teasing plans to stop monetizing AI slop on YouTube, it has not done so with the hundreds of channels with millions of followers that *only* show AI slop. To make matters worse, Google is actively investing in AI studios like Animaj that produce AI videos for young children, including babies and toddlers who should not have any screen time at all.

Google's current AI policies and practices are potentially harming millions of developing children. Right now, the burden unjustly falls on the shoulders of parents and caregivers. Even the most involved adult would have difficulty detecting AI videos and ensuring children didn't watch them. And all children deserve to be protected from AI slop, regardless of whether an adult is watching with them. If Google wants to continue marketing YouTube and YouTube Kids to children, it is the company's responsibility to ensure that its platforms are safe and developmentally appropriate. Given the absence of evidence that AI slop is safe for children and the potential for these videos to mesmerize and harm kids, Google must take swift action to protect children on its platforms.

Sincerely,

Fairplay

All Girls Allowed

Allies Against Slavery

Ameera Foundation

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work

American Counseling Association

American Federation of Teachers

American Youth Association (AYA)

Apple Blossom Village

Becca Schmill Foundation

Berkeley Media Studies Group

Better Screen Time

Bronstein Family Foundation

Buckets Over Bullying

Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc.

Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation

Center for Digital Democracy

Center for Responsible Technology

Chasing Hope Foundation

Child Online Africa

Children & Nature Network

Children First Canada

Children's Advocacy Centers of North Dakota

Children's Advocacy Institute

Children's Justice International

Civic Shout

Clinical Social Work Association

Coalition Against Trafficking in Women

Coalition for Healthy School Food

Community Campaign against Human Trafficking

Consumer Federation of America

Consumer Federation of California

The Dais at Toronto Metropolitan University

Dance Awareness: No Child Exploited(DA:NCE)

David's Legacy Foundation

Defending the Early Years

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)

Design It For Us

Devin J Norring Foundation

Digital Childhood Alliance

Digital Health and Education Network- Kenya (DHEN-K)

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Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action

eClarity LLC

EdTech Law Center PLLC

Educate and Empower Kids

Emmy's Champions

Enough Abuse

Enough Is Enough

Enrichment Center Ethiopia (ECE)

Erik's Cause

Father-Con

Fight to End Exploitation

Forgiven Much Ministries

Four Norms

Free NOLA, Inc.

Global Alliance for Inspiring Non-tech Infant Nurturing and Growth (GAINING)

Global Hope 365

Grace McComas Memorial

Graham Boeckh Foundation

Health Professionals for Safer Screens

Healthier-Tech

Healthy Screen Habits

Hickey Family Foundation

Horizon School Division No. 205

HumanTraffickingAbolitionists

Insight Counseling Group

Institute for Families & Technology

Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)

Less Than 3 Foundation

Let's Grow Brain P.O.W.E.R.!

Lynn's Warriors

Matthew E. Minor Awareness Foundation

Media Protect: Healthy Childhood in the Digital Age

Mentari

Mothers Against Media Addiction (MAMA)

Mulberry Waldorf School

National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI)

National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE)

NC Stop Human Trafficking

New Englanders Against Sexual Exploitation (NEASE) - RI Chapter

Moms for Ethical AI

OR Unplugged

Outdoor Play Canada

PA Unplugged

Pacific NW Screen Time Action Network

Paradigm Shift Training and Consulting

Parents Who Fight

ParentsSOS

Pasadena Waldorf School

Paving the Way Foundation Inc.

Phone-Free Schools Movement Canada

Phone-Free Schools Movement US

Porn Free Colorado

Project LookUp

Project STAND

Psychotherapy Action Network

Public Citizen

Raising Awareness About Digital Dangers (RAADD)

Reconnect Malden

Reconnect Webinars

Reflection Ministries

Reflective Spaces Ministry, Corp

Safe Exit Initiative

SAVE (Suicide Awareness Voices of Education)

Scrolling 2 Death

Share Save Spend

Shared Hope International

Sing for Me Music LLC

Smartphone Free Childhood US

Social Media Harms

Southwest Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking

Spark & Stitch Institute

Speaking of Social

State Universal Basic Education Board SUBEB Kano State Nigeria

The Stop Trafficking Project®

Street Grace, Inc

STSC

Student Data Privacy Project (SDPP)

Sudbury for Digital Balance

Talk More. Tech Less.

Tech Safe Solutions LLC

Turn the Tide Coalition

Turning Life On

Tyler Clementi Foundation

United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry

Victims2Survivors- US

Virginia Unplugged

VSAK Institute

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