

ASSEMBLY BUDGET COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR

ASSEMBLY, No. 4014

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 28, 2026

The Assembly Budget Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 4014 ACS.

As amended, the committee substitute establishes a Social Media Research Center at a four-year public institution of higher education for the purpose of carrying out collaborative and interdisciplinary research to create and support the use of impartial and actionable science to advance efforts in understanding social media use, mitigating the negative impacts of social media, and promoting healthy and responsible social media use. The Secretary of Higher Education is required to choose the four-year public institution of higher education at which the center will be hosted based on, at minimum, institutional capacity, interest, and existing expertise.

The center's research, analysis, and outreach activities will include: (1) studying the impacts of social media consumption on the residents of the State and mitigating any negative impacts of such consumption; (2) making policy recommendations to the Legislature, Governor, and key stakeholders to address the mental, physical, and behavioral health challenges posed by social media use, particularly for children and adolescents; (3) establishing online courses and training modules concerning safe social media use, which will be made available at no charge to schools in the State; and (4) conducting research, and making recommendations, on such topics as may be required by law related to the impact of addictive social media behaviors on children and minors and the extent to which warning labels and other disclaimers reduce addictive social media behaviors.

The bill permits State departments and agencies to submit relevant research requests and questions to the center.

The bill authorizes the center, in addition to its own research, to administer a grant program for research on social media. Research funds under the grant program will be awarded on the basis of scientific merit under a competitive peer review process that assures objectivity, consistency, and high quality.

The bill requires State departments and agencies to provide, to the extent practicable and feasible, the data necessary for the center to

conduct its research, upon request from the center. The bill stipulates that all data transmitted to and received by the center will be provided in a manner that protects privacy and complies with applicable federal and State law.

The bill requires the four-year public institution of higher education hosting the center to submit a report on the work of the center to the Governor and the Legislature one year following the establishment of the center, and every year thereafter. The report is required to include information on the center's current research projects, funding utilized, research requests and questions received from State departments and agencies, and the direction of its future research. If the center administers a grant program, the report is to also include information on the grants awarded and the program's accomplishments. In addition, the center and any recipients of grants awarded by the center will provide copies of their research publications to the Governor, the Legislature, and any State departments or agencies that supplied data used in connection with the research.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to specify that State departments and agencies will only provide the data necessary for the center to conduct its research, upon request from the center, to the extent practicable and feasible.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) finds that this bill will lead to an annual State expenditure increase to support the establishment of a Social Media Research Center at a four-year public institution of higher education. The magnitude of the State expenditure increase will depend on the amount annually appropriated for the center.

The OLS notes that, while the bill does not explicitly include an appropriation for the center, the FY2027 Governor's Budget recommends a \$500,000 appropriation for a Social Media Research Center.

The four-year public institution of higher education selected to house the Social Media Research Center would experience expenditure increases from utilizing the funds provided through the annual appropriations act and any other funds received from grants, gifts, donations, or other public or private sources.