SPONSOR: Sen. S. McBride & Sen. Sturgeon & Sen. Lockman & Rep. Heffernan & Rep. K. Williams & Rep. Dorsey Walker
Sens. Hansen, Townsend, Walsh; Reps. Baumbach, Kowalko, Morrison, Shupe, Wilson-Anton

DELAWARE STATE SENATE
151st GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE BILL NO. 195
AS AMENDED BY
SENATE AMENDMENT NO. 1

AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO MEDIA LITERACY.

WHEREAS, the social implications of technological development are pervasive, and the reach and influence of digital media platforms will continue to expand; and

WHEREAS, the spread of misinformation poses a clear risk to democracy; and

WHEREAS, most students in the United States are not learning skills to discern the quality of online information, how to make informed, reasoned decisions about how to use the information and tools at their disposal, or the ethics of those decisions; and

WHEREAS, during the COVID-19 pandemic, students have been relying on devices and online learning more than ever, highlighting the urgent need to equip students with information about cyber safety and digital citizenship; and

WHEREAS, a recent Stanford University report showed that 96% of high school students surveyed lacked the skills to judge the reliability of information online, and two-thirds were unable to tell the difference between news stories and ads; and

WHEREAS, the same study found that 91% of teachers believe digital citizenship is effective in helping students make smart, safe, and ethical decisions online; and

WHEREAS, media literacy skills are necessary to safely, responsibly, and critically consume and use social media and other forms of media; and

WHEREAS, there are organizations that have a primary purpose of providing education about media literacy, including Media Literacy Now, ISTE, The Center for Media Literacy, the National Association for Media Literacy Education, the American Association of School Librarians, and the News Literacy Project; and

WHEREAS, the Delaware Department of Education currently does not have standards that address comprehensive media literacy education in K-12 public schools; and

WHEREAS, media literacy can be incorporated into existing curricula standards; and

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WHEREAS, standards-aligned media literacy curricula is needed to guarantee the vitality of American democracy and students' ability to engage in civic life; and

WHEREAS, greater investment and development of media literacy education is needed to prepare students to make informed civic decisions that affect them, their families, their communities, and their world.

NOW, THEREFORE:

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

Section 1. Amend Chapter 41, Title 14 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike through and insertions as shown by underline as follows:

§ 4143. Media Literacy.

(a) For purposes of this section:

(1) "Media Literacy" means the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and take action with all forms of communication, and encompasses the foundational skills of digital citizenship and internet safety including the norms of appropriate, responsible, ethical, and healthy behavior, and cyberbullying prevention.

(2) "Digital Citizenship" means the diverse set of skills related to current technology and social media including the norms of appropriate, responsible, and healthy behavior.

(b)(1) The Department of Education (Department) shall adopt evidence-based, media literacy standards (standards) for use by each school district and charter school serving students in 1 or more of the grades kindergarten through 12.

(2) The Delaware State Librarian and school districts and charter schools, including certified school librarians, may provide technical expertise to the Department regarding the standards.

(c) The standards and instructional materials must be age-appropriate and must address appropriate, responsible, and healthy online behavior, including all of the following:

(1) The purpose and acceptable use of different social media platforms.

(2) Understanding the negative impact of inappropriate technology use, including online bullying and harassment, hacking, intentional virus setting, invasion of privacy, and piracy of software, music, video, and other media.

(3) Social media behavior that promotes cybersafety, cybersecurity, and cyberethics, including etiquette, safety, security, and the identification of hate speech.

(4) Identifying credible sources of information and how to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and participate in all forms of digital communication.

(5) Critical thinking skills, including all of the following:

a. Understanding how media messages shape culture and society.

b. Identifying target-marketing strategies and naming techniques of persuasion used.

c. Recognizing bias and misinformation by discovering parts of the story that are not being told and evaluating media messages based on personal experiences, skills, beliefs, and values.

(6) Identifying the purpose of media messages and how they are constructed, including all of the following:

a. Explicit and implicit media messages.

b. Values and points of view that are included and excluded.

c. How the media may influence ideas and behaviors.

d. The importance of obtaining information from multiple sources.

(d) Every 3 years, the Department shall prepare a written report, no later than July 31, that includes the educational programming provided under this section and how the school districts and charter schools implemented the standards under this section. The Department shall send this report to the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, with copies to all members of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Director and the Librarian of the Division of Research of Legislative Council, and the Delaware Public Archives.

(e) The Department, with the approval of the State Board of Education, may promulgate regulations necessary to implement and enforce this section.

Section 2. This Act takes effect beginning the school year that begins following its enactment into law.

Section 3. This Act is known as "The Digital Citizenship Education Act".