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Press Release

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NEW PHOENIX CENTER STUDY FINDS NO EVIDENCE THAT STREAMING VIDEO SERVICES CONTRIBUTE TO YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

Given these results, study finds that it makes no sense to lump streaming video services into proposals intended to mitigate social media enabled harms

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A growing body of research suggests that excessive social media use may cause psychological distress in adolescents and teens. While there are questions about the quality of the evidence and size of the effects, there is no question that this research is driving legislation at the state and federal levels—including the recently re-introduced Kids Online Safety Act. While some of these legislative efforts target social media services narrowly, others take a much broader approach and impose regulatory mandates on a wide range of online services, including online television services.

To determine whether this legislative net is cast too wide, in a new analysis released today entitled *Is Social Media Legislation Too Broad? An Empirical Analysis*, Phoenix Center Chief Economist Dr. George S. Ford uses a large survey of American teens to quantify the relationship between teen mental health and the use of television and computer services like social media. Dr. Ford's analysis demonstrates that the sprawling and imprecise coverage of online services in these legislative efforts is unsupported by the data. In fact, Dr. Ford finds that television viewing in moderation is correlated with better mental health outcomes.

“Regulation is costly and invariably leads to unintended consequences,” says study author Phoenix Center Chief Economist Dr. George S. Ford. “Legislative efforts to address the teen mental health crisis should be data driven and focus exclusively on problem areas rather than cast a wide net that catches services unrelated to—and even favorable to—youth mental health.”

A full copy of PHOENIX CENTER POLICY PAPER NO. 59, *Is Social Media Legislation Too Broad? An Empirical Analysis*, may be downloaded free from the Phoenix Center's web page at: <https://phoenix-center.org/pcpp/PCPP59Final.pdf>.

The Phoenix Center is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that studies broad public-policy issues related to governance, social and economic conditions, with a particular emphasis on the law and economics of the digital age.