



December 13, 2022

Tim Cook
Chief Executive Officer
Apple Inc.
One Apple Park Way
Cupertino, CA 95014

Re: TikTok's App Store Age Rating

Dear Mr. Cook:

We write to demand that you take immediate action to correct the "12+" age rating displayed in Apple's App Store for the TikTok app by the end of the year.

Some of us are already pursuing or considering legal action against TikTok in connection with TikTok's age rating, but we believe that Apple also bears responsibility for the age rating misrepresentations displayed on TikTok's page in the App Store. Apple has created the age-rating categories that the App Store uses, and it defines them for consumers. The App Store specifically tells consumers that apps with a "12+" rating "may ... contain infrequent mild language" and "mild or infrequent mature or suggestive themes" "which may not be suitable for children under the age of 12," while apps with a "17+" rating "may ... contain frequent and intense offensive language," "frequent and intense mature ... and suggestive themes," "plus sexual content, nudity, alcohol, tobacco, and drugs which may not be suitable for children under the age of 17." According to these descriptions and in light of the content that is actually available on TikTok, it is clear that TikTok can only qualify for a "17+" rating in the App Store. By allowing TikTok to continue claiming a false "12+" rating, Apple is facilitating the deception of consumers on a massive scale.

The App Store currently displays a "12+" age rating for the TikTok app. It also displays a series of additional age-rating descriptions for the TikTok app, including that the TikTok app contains "Infrequent/Mild Alcohol, Tobacco, or Drug Use or References," "Infrequent/Mild Sexual Content and Nudity," "Infrequent/Mild Profanity or Crude Humor," and "Infrequent/Mild Mature/Suggestive Themes." These representations are false.

In reality, the TikTok app contains frequent and intense alcohol, tobacco, and drug use or references, sexual content, profanity, and mature/suggestive themes. TikTok users can search for hundreds of thousands of hashtags related to these topics, which each return thousands of videos in these categories—instructional videos about drug use, descriptions of drinking games, recipes

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for cannabis edibles, demonstrations of vaping tricks, pole dancing routines, descriptions of sexual kinks and rape fantasies, and millions of videos set to songs with explicit lyrics, which TikTok makes available to users in its music library. TikTok not only allows users to find this content, but it suggests it to users through its “autocomplete” search function and by offering this type of content to users on the “For You” page. This is true even for TikTok accounts registered to 13-year-old users and even when “Restricted Mode” is enabled for such a user (“Restricted Mode” is a content control tool that TikTok claims will filter objectionable content for users). TikTok is also aware that a large number of its users are under 13 years old and have lied about their age in order to create a profile on TikTok’s platform. These under-13 users have access to the objectionable content and features just described.

This deception has real consequences for kids and parents. Parents rely on age-rating descriptions in the App Store when deciding which apps they will allow their kids to use. They do this through direct supervision and by setting parental controls on their kids’ devices, which can prevent kids under 17 from downloading apps with a “17+” rating. Parents depend on the accuracy of age ratings in the App Store. Apple shares the responsibility to ensure that apps like TikTok display an accurate age rating to consumers in the App Store. When parents are deceived into letting their kids download TikTok, there are real consequences. Exposure to drug, alcohol, and tobacco content on social media makes kids more likely to use or experiment with those illicit substances in real life. And exposure to sexual content on TikTok can lead to pornography addiction and even the sexual exploitation of kids by online predators.

The undersigned State Attorneys General urge you to take immediate action to correct TikTok’s rating in the App Store from “12+” to “17+” and to correct the age rating descriptions that accompany it. Absent such action, we reserve the right to take legal action against Apple for the ongoing misrepresentations about TikTok in the App Store, up to and including litigation and civil penalties.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Austin Knudsen".

Austin Knudsen
Montana Attorney General

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Alabama Attorney General

Leslie Rutledge
Arkansas Attorney General

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