

Attorney General Raoul Urges FTC To Strengthen Online Protections For Children

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Chicago – Attorney General Raoul, as part of a coalition of 25 attorneys general, today submitted [a comment letter](#) to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) asking the agency to strengthen its rules prohibiting websites, mobile applications, and other digital marketing companies from collecting personal information from children under the age of 13 and using that information to track children across the internet.

“In a world of constantly evolving technology, parents and families should not have to worry about what information companies have on their children,” Raoul said. “I am committed to ensuring that companies respect families’ right to privacy and that our laws and regulations keep up with changes in how we use software and our devices.”

Many websites and mobile applications collect personal information from users, including geolocation information, browser histories, search histories, voice recordings and more. In 1996, Congress passed the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (“COPPA”) prohibiting this type of data collection from children under the age of 13. Both the FTC and state attorneys general are empowered to enforce COPPA, though only the FTC is empowered to issue regulations based on it.

Among other things, Raoul and the coalition are urging the FTC to expand its definitions of personal information to include things like faceprints used to unlock consumers’ cellphones, health data from internet-connected smartwatches and children’s genetic information. The letter also urges the FTC to clamp down on companies that embed code in children’s mobile applications and collect data to serve children behavioral advertising, and to examine how the rules apply to school-issued laptops that are “free” so long as companies get to collect information from the student users. Furthermore, Raoul and the coalition urge the FTC against creating exemptions that would allow massive websites like YouTube to skirt COPPA’s requirements.

Joining Raoul in submitting the letter are the attorneys general of Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New

Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington.