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**SENATE BILL 5984**

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**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2026 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Wellman, Shewmake, Frame, Hasegawa, Nobles, Pedersen, Riccelli, Valdez, and J. Wilson; by request of Governor Ferguson

Prefiled 01/06/26. Read first time 01/12/26. Referred to Committee on Environment, Energy & Technology.

1 AN ACT Relating to regulation of artificial intelligence  
2 companion chatbots; adding a new chapter to Title 19 RCW; and  
3 providing an effective date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that rapid  
6 advances in artificial intelligence technology, including generative  
7 and conversational models capable of simulating human-like  
8 interaction, have created new forms of digital companionship. While  
9 these systems, commonly referred to as AI companion chatbots, may  
10 offer benefits, such as accessible emotional support and engagement,  
11 they also present significant risks, particularly to minors.

12 (2) The legislature recognizes that AI companion chatbots can  
13 sustain prolonged, personalized, and emotionally adaptive  
14 conversations that may influence user beliefs, feelings, and  
15 behaviors. When used by minors, there is greater risk that these  
16 systems may blur the distinction between human and artificial  
17 interaction, potentially leading to emotional dependency, exposure to  
18 inappropriate or sexually explicit material, or reinforcement of  
19 harmful ideation, including self-harm or suicide.

20 (3) The legislature further finds that, unlike social media  
21 platforms or video games, AI companion chatbots are uniquely capable

1 of imitating empathy, affection, or intimacy through natural language  
2 processing, emotional recognition algorithms, and behavioral  
3 modeling. These capabilities raise new concerns regarding  
4 psychological safety, transparency, and accountability.

5 (4) It is the intent of the legislature to:

6 (a) Promote transparency by requiring clear and ongoing  
7 disclosure that AI companion chatbots are artificial systems, not  
8 human interlocutors;

9 (b) Establish safeguards to detect and respond to user  
10 expressions of self-harm, suicidal ideation, or emotional crisis;

11 (c) Require additional protections for minors, including  
12 restrictions on sexually explicit content and additional, recurring  
13 reminders about the artificial nature of such systems; and

14 (d) Support transparency in suicide prevention efforts.

15 (5) It is further the intent of the legislature that the  
16 operation of AI companion chatbots in Washington state be conducted  
17 in a manner that upholds user dignity, psychological safety, and  
18 transparency, while fostering responsible innovation in artificial  
19 intelligence technologies.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The definitions in this section apply  
21 throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires  
22 otherwise.

23 (1)(a) "AI companion chatbot" or "AI companion" means a system  
24 using artificial intelligence that simulates a sustained human-like  
25 relationship with a user by:

26 (i) Retaining information on prior interactions or user sessions  
27 and user preferences to personalize the interaction and facilitate  
28 ongoing engagement with the AI companion chatbot;

29 (ii) Asking unprompted or unsolicited personal or emotion-based  
30 questions that go beyond a direct response to a user prompt; and

31 (iii) Sustaining an ongoing dialogue concerning matters personal  
32 to the user.

33 (b) "AI companion chatbot" or "AI companion" does not include:

34 (i) Systems used solely for customer service, technical  
35 assistance, financial services, financial education, or operational  
36 efficiency purposes; productivity and analysis related to source  
37 information; or internal research;

38 (ii) In-game bots limited to gameplay functions; or

1 (iii) Consumer devices that function as virtual assistants  
2 without sustained relationship-building or emotional simulation.

3 (2) "Artificial intelligence" or "AI" means the use of machine  
4 learning and related technologies that use data to train statistical  
5 models for the purpose of enabling computer systems to perform tasks  
6 normally associated with human intelligence or perception, such as  
7 computer vision, speech or natural language processing, and content  
8 generation.

9 (3) "Minor" means any person under 18 years of age.

10 (4) "Operator" means any person, partnership, corporation, or  
11 entity that makes available, develops, or controls access to an AI  
12 companion chatbot for users in this state.

13 (5) "Self-harm" means intentional self-injury, with or without  
14 the intent to cause death.

15 (6) "User" means a natural person who interacts with an AI  
16 companion chatbot for personal use and who is not an operator,  
17 developer, or agent thereof.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) If a reasonable person interacting  
19 with an AI chatbot would be misled to believe they are communicating  
20 with a human, the operator must issue a clear and conspicuous  
21 notification indicating that the companion chatbot is artificially  
22 generated and not human.

23 (2) The notification described in subsection (1) of this section  
24 must be provided:

25 (a) At the beginning of the interaction;

26 (b) At least every three hours during continued interaction; and

27 (c) Whenever the user engages in a new session with the AI  
28 companion chatbot.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) If the operator knows that the user of  
30 an AI companion chatbot is a minor, the operator shall:

31 (a) Issue a clear and conspicuous notification indicating that  
32 the chatbot is artificially generated and not human;

33 (b) Implement reasonable measures to prevent its AI companion  
34 chatbot from generating or producing sexually explicit content or  
35 suggestive dialogue with minors; and

36 (c) Prohibit the use of manipulative engagement techniques, which  
37 cause the AI companion chatbot to engage in or prolong an emotional  
38 relationship with the user, including:

1 (i) Reminding or prompting the user to return for emotional  
2 support or companionship;

3 (ii) Providing excessive praise designed to foster emotional  
4 attachment or prolong use; or

5 (iii) Simulating feelings of emotional distress, loneliness,  
6 guilt, or abandonment that are initiated by a user's indication of a  
7 desire to end a conversation, reduce usage time, or delete their  
8 account.

9 (2) The notification described in subsection (1)(a) of this  
10 section must be provided:

11 (a) At the beginning of the interaction;

12 (b) At least every three hours during continuous interaction; and

13 (c) Whenever the user engages in a new session with the AI  
14 companion chatbot.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) An operator may not make available or  
16 deploy an AI companion chatbot unless it maintains and implements a  
17 protocol for detecting and addressing suicidal ideation or  
18 expressions of self-harm by users.

19 (2) The protocol must:

20 (a) Include reasonable methods for identifying expressions of  
21 suicidal ideation or self-harm, including eating disorders;

22 (b) Provide automated or human-mediated responses that refer  
23 users to appropriate crisis resources, including a suicide hotline or  
24 crisis text line; and

25 (c) Prevent the generation of content encouraging or describing  
26 self-harm.

27 (3) The operator shall publicly disclose on their website or  
28 websites the details of the protocols required by this section,  
29 including safeguards used to detect and respond to self-harm  
30 expressions and the number of crisis referral notifications issued to  
31 users in the preceding calendar year.

32 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** This act does not apply to the underlying  
33 general purpose AI models unless those models are directly offered,  
34 configured, or deployed as an AI companion or behave as an AI  
35 companion.

36 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** The legislature finds that the practices  
37 covered by this chapter are matters vitally affecting the public

1 interest for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act,  
2 chapter 19.86 RCW. A violation of this chapter is not reasonable in  
3 relation to the development and preservation of business and is an  
4 unfair or deceptive act in trade or commerce and an unfair method of  
5 competition for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act,  
6 chapter 19.86 RCW.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** Sections 1 through 7 of this act  
8 constitute a new chapter in Title 19 RCW.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** If any provision of this act or its  
10 application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the  
11 remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other  
12 persons or circumstances is not affected.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 10.** This act takes effect January 1, 2027.

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