

TikTok's test for youth mental health

POLITICO Pro's Morning Education <newsletter@email.politicopro.com>

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BY MACKENZIE WILKES

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QUICK FIX

— **With TikTok's CEO set to testify before members of Congress today**, lawmakers push for broader legislation to address social media's effects on youth mental health and data privacy concerns.

— **The Parents Bill of Rights advances to the full House** with 22 amendments up for consideration. Three of the 22 amendments come from Democrats.

— **Public comment on USDA's new proposed rule lowering the Community Eligibility Provision threshold opens today.** The new rule would expand the number of schools eligible to provide free school meals.

IT'S THURSDAY, MARCH 23. WELCOME TO MORNING EDUCATION. Reach out to your host with tips at

mwilkes@politico.com. Also send tips to my colleagues Bianca

Quilantan at bquilantan@politico.com, Juan Perez Jr. at

jperez@politico.com and Michael Stratford at

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DRIVING THE DAY

TESTING TIKTOK — TikTok CEO Shou Chew is expected to [defend the social media platform to members of Congress](#) today amid growing concerns over the app's negative impact on teen and youth mental health and concerns over youth data privacy.

— **Lawmakers and school districts alike have decried social media platforms** for contributing to poor youth mental health. Democratic lawmakers have suggested that instead of singling out TikTok, Congress should look at the negative aspects that multiple platforms contribute to.

— **“The shame and the anxiety and FOMO affiliated with many of the platforms out there is all very, very concerning,”** Rep. [Jamaal Bowman](#) (D-N.Y.), a former educator who sits on the House Education panel, told your host yesterday before heading to votes. “That's one of the reasons why I'm an advocate for let's really look at social media and comprehensive legislation and figure out how to make it the best it can be instead of targeting one platform that one might argue is just better than the other platforms.”

— **Bowman along with Democratic Reps. [Mark Pocan](#) (Wis.) and [Robert Garcia](#) (Calif.)** held a press conference yesterday evening with TikTok influencers. Pocan said there's a “real problem” across social media platforms “about our data and the privacy of our data and selling our data and allowing misinformation, but that is not what's being addressed when people say they want to ban TikTok.”

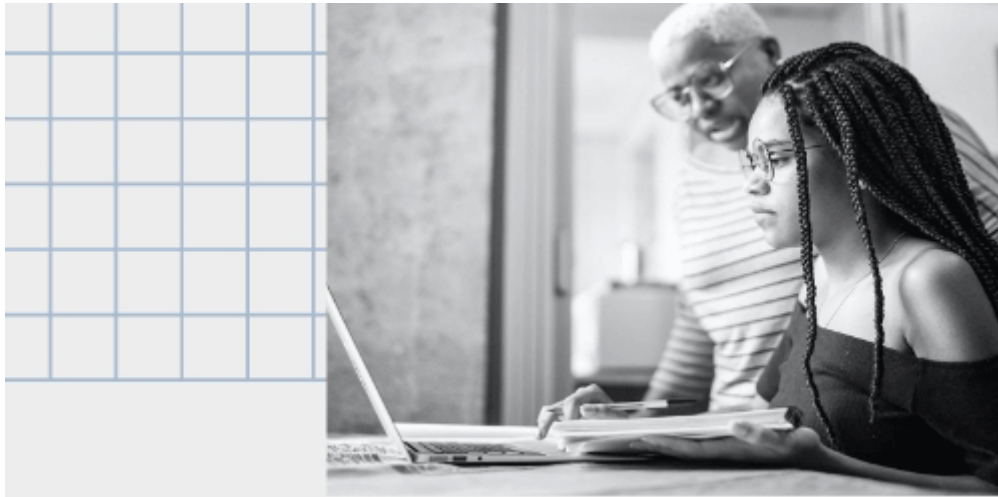
— **Meanwhile, Sen. [Ed Markey](#) (D-Mass.) has called on Congress to pass legislation** that would protect kids' data privacy overall rather

than just focusing on TikTok. Markey said he plans to reintroduce the Children and Teen's Online Privacy Protection Act. [POLITICO's Alfred Ng has more on that.](#)

– **The company is expected to commit to safety “particularly for teenagers”** according to Chew's prepared testimony before the House Energy and Commerce Committee this morning. One [study from the Center for Countering Digital Hate](#) found that new teen accounts (set up by researchers) that paused and liked videos on body image and mental health were served eating disorder and suicide content within minutes.

– **Conservatives are also pushing back against the mental health and data privacy issues** TikTok presents. Republican Reps. [Anna Paulina Luna](#) (Fla.), [Mary Miller](#) (Ill.) and [Troy Nehls](#) (Texas) are holding a press conference today addressing the “data exploitation practices, privacy abuses, influence operations, and promotion of social contagions have left Americans vulnerable” to the Chinese Communist Party. The members of Congress will be joined by representatives from the Heritage Foundation and Moms for Liberty.

– **Schools are stepping in:** Legal complaints over the video platform's effect on youth mental health have been bubbling up from school districts across the country. Earlier this year, [Seattle Public Schools filed a lawsuit](#) in a U.S. District Court against TikTok and other social media companies over the youth mental health crisis. [Another Washington school district](#) and districts in Arizona, [Oregon](#), [New Jersey](#) and a [county in Pennsylvania](#) have all filed similar complaints against TikTok and social media companies over youth mental health.



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ON THE HILL

HEADED TO THE FLOOR — The GOP's "Parents Bill of Rights" along with 22 amendments is expected to be considered on the House floor today.

— **The bill includes several provisions already taking place in schools** around the country including parent-teacher meetings and public disclosure of school budget materials.

— **Among the 22 amendments up for a vote today** are provisions that would grant a parent the right to know if their child's school permits transgender students to participate in women's or girls' sports or allows transgender students to use bathrooms that match their gender identity. The bill included three Democratic amendments.

— **A possible vote on the bill could happen this Friday.** The legislation, which has the backing of over 100 House Republicans,

would face a tough chance in the Democratic-led Senate. Bianca [has more on what went down at the rules hearing](#) where House Democrats dubbed the bill as the “Politics Over Parents Act.”

STUDENT LOANS — The House Education and the Workforce Committee is holding its first subcommittee hearing today on the Biden administration’s student loan proposals. You can tune into the higher education subcommittee’s hearing [here at 10:15 a.m.](#)

— Meet the witnesses:

- **Marc Goldwein**, senior vice president and senior policy director for the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget
- **Adam Looney**, executive director of the Marriner S. Eccles Institute for Economics and Quantitative Analysis at the University of Utah
- **Carlo Salerno**, former vice president for research at financial aid ed tech company CampusLogic
- **Sameer Gadkaree**, president of The Institute for College Access & Success

— **Reminder:** The hearing comes as borrowers await a Supreme Court ruling deciding the fate of the Biden administration’s student loan debt forgiveness plan that could offer up to \$20,000 in debt forgiveness. The administration also laid out a [new costly income-driven repayment plan](#) that would cut monthly payments for undergraduate borrowers in half among other things.

SCHOOL NUTRITION

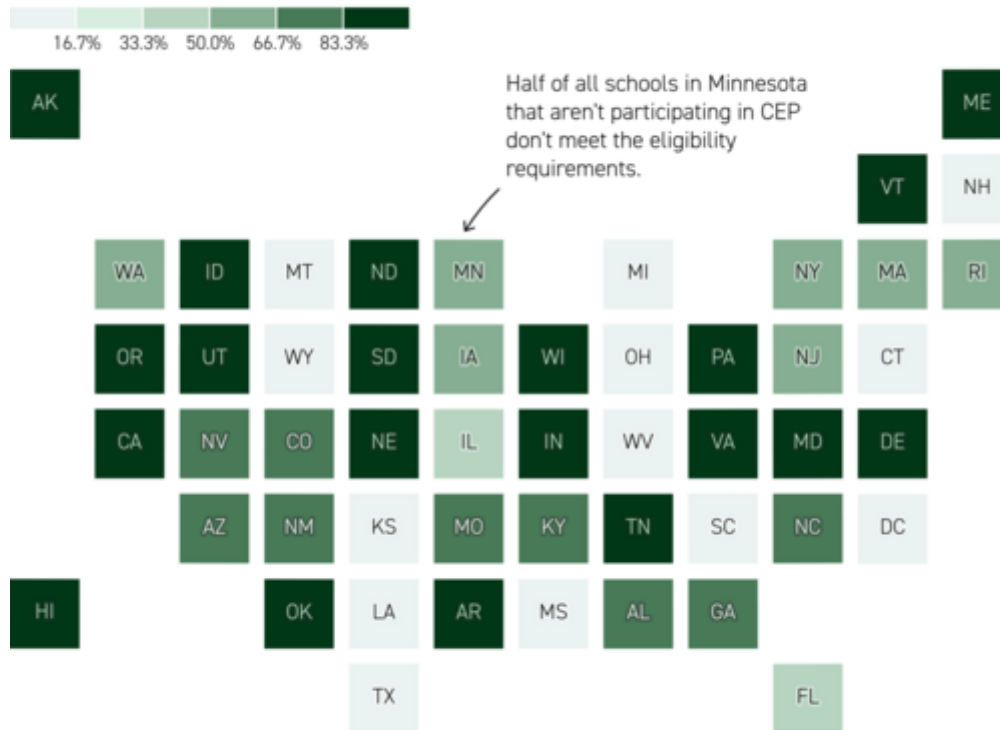
LOWERING THE THRESHOLD — A Biden administration proposal would make it easier for schools to serve no-cost meals to all students. The Agriculture Department announced a proposed rule that makes changes to the Community Eligibility Provision that lowers the identified student percentage threshold from 40 to 25 percent. Public comment begins today.

— **CEP refresher:** Schools that participate in the provision are able to give free school meals to all students if 40 percent or more of their students are already eligible for free meals. The proposal would make more schools eligible to provide free school meals to all students. Last

school year, [most schools that weren't participating](#) in the provision didn't meet the 40 percent ISP requirement:

Most schools not participating in CEP aren't eligible

Percentage of schools not participating in the Community Eligibility Provision because they don't meet the requirements



Note: Community Eligibility Participation information is based on data gathered by FRAC from state agencies for the 2021-22 school year.

Source: Food Research and Action Center
Mackenzie Wilkes/POLITICO

Food Research and Action Center, Mackenzie Wilkes/Politico

— **Several states providing universal free school meals are maximizing participation** in the federal Community Eligibility Provision. Lowering the threshold is something states and school food service professionals have lauded as a way to make serving universal free school meals easier.

— **“Many schools and even some entire states have successfully provided free meals** to all their students,” USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack said in a statement. “We applaud their leadership in nourishing children and hope this proposed change will make it possible for more schools and states to follow suit.”

— **Universal free school meals legislation became law in Minnesota** last week. The state joins California, Maine and Colorado

in serving no-cost meals for students. Additional proposals are being floated in Wisconsin, New York and Pennsylvania.

POLL POSITION

— The **National Parents Union** is out with [a new poll by Echelon Insights](#) that found the overwhelming majority of parents surveyed think a K-12 education “bill of rights” should guarantee students access to “high-quality, well-rounded education with resources to support their individual needs.”

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Lisa Coons will be Virginia’s next superintendent of public instruction starting April 17. Coons is chief academic officer in Tennessee. **Jeremy Raley** was named chief of staff of the state education department.

Doug Levin, director of K12 SIX, has been appointed to serve on CISA’s Cybersecurity Advisory Committee. The appointment is a two-year term.

ON THE CALENDAR

10 a.m. ET The House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee is holding a public witness day hearing. You can [watch here](#).

12 p.m. ET The Information Technology and Innovation Foundation is [holding a virtual discussion](#) on “How Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality (AR/VR) Can Help Expand Apprenticeship Programs.”

2 p.m. ET The House Judiciary Constitution and Limited Government Subcommittee is holding a hearing on “Free Speech: The Biden Administration’s Chilling of Parents’ Fundamental Rights.” You can [watch here](#).

Did we miss anything? Email educalendar@politicopro.com.

SYLLABUS

– 2 faculty members shot at Denver’s East High School, police seek public’s help in finding suspect: [The Denver Post](#)

– School funding proposals advance in California Legislature: [POLITICO Pro](#)

– West Texas A&M University president cancels student drag show, saying it degrades women: [The Texas Tribune](#)

– What we do (and don't) know about teacher shortages, and what can be done about them: [NPR](#)

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