

STUDENT SENATE BILL 2023-1092

TITLE: Resolution Condemning Florida Board of Governors' Decision to Ban Asian Social Media Platforms at Public Universities

AUTHOR(S): Senator Laurie Wang

SPONSOR(S): Judiciary Chair Jonathan C. Stephens, Senator Antonio Hendricks, Member-at-Large Johnny Liu, Senator Bryan Garcia-Ramos, Judiciary Vice-Chair Joaquin R. C. Marcelino, Senator Eric Oh, Senator Anghelo Gangano, Senator Zoe Nye, Senator Monish Vijayaraghavan, Senator Jeff John, Senator Wavid Bowman, Senator Kishan Nayak, Senator Owen Lekebusch, Senator Ayesha Khuddus, Senator Anamika Naidu, Senator Aron Ali-McClory, Senator Asif Islam, Senator Karthik Boregowda, Majority Party Leader Simone Liang, Senator Zoe Richter, Senator Ana Alvarez, Minority Party Leader Bronson Allemand, Senator Jordan Neidenberg, Senator Julia Seifer, Member at Large Isabel Ponce, Senate President Oscar Santiago Perez, Senate President Pro Tempore Nathan McGinnis

WHEREAS, studies have produced quantitative data that shows how social media platforms provide a host of benefits to their users, which can include but are not limited to: an increased likelihood to have positive mental health, increased social connectedness between young people & their families [1], and an increased appreciation of diverse perspectives & cultures [2]; and,

WHEREAS, social media platforms have become crucial tools for the communication and coordination of a host of student organizations, including many organizations dedicated to preserving cultural identities, because they grant organizations the ability to remotely disseminate information to many individuals simultaneously, recruit in order to grow their membership, and advocate for the causes they believe in on the global stage; and,

WHEREAS, around “90 percent” of young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 make active use of social media platforms such as TikTok [1], this age range also coinciding as the primary age range for undergraduate university students, while the majority of users on social media platforms such as WeChat are from Asian countries and/or are of Asian descent [3]; and,

WHEREAS, the Florida Board of Governors has made the decision to ban Asian social media platforms [4], including WeChat, TikTok, and others [5], at public universities in the state of Florida [6], citing cybersecurity concerns and national security risks [7]; and,

WHEREAS, the Florida Board of Governors has deemed it necessary to act upon potential cybersecurity concerns and national security risks with respect to these Asian social media platforms while identical privacy violations and clandestine behavior are currently being exhibited by non-Asian social media platforms [8]; and,

WHEREAS, the University of Florida (UF) is home to a significant number of international students, with a notable presence from China, India, and South Korea, as per the Fall 2020 enrollment data [9]; and,

WHEREAS, UF has witnessed a substantial growth in the number of international students in recent years [10], recognizing the unique challenges they face as they embark on their college experiences in a different country; and,

WHEREAS, international students encounter various obstacles such as adapting to new cultures, language barriers, and a lack of existing social connections in the host country, exacerbating the academic and social challenges they already face; and,

WHEREAS, social media platforms, including WeChat, have proven to be valuable tools for international students in navigating college life away from home, providing avenues for social support, maintaining connections with family and friends in their home country, and fostering new friendships and professional networks in the host country; and,

WHEREAS, studies have shown that social support plays a crucial role in individual's adjustment to college, offering psychological and material resources that contribute to their wellbeing and happiness [11]; and,

WHEREAS, social media platforms serve as a means to access and cultivate social support for international students, allowing them to receive emotional and instrumental assistance in their academic and personal pursuits; and,

WHEREAS, a multitude of students at UF have expressed their disapproval of the Florida Board of Governors' decision to impose a ban on these Asian social media platforms, viewing the decision as inherently hypocritical due to the aforementioned nature of activities undertaken by non-Asian companies; and,

WHEREAS, it is the duty of the Student Body Senate to amplify the voices of the student body at large, serving as their advocate so that their voices are heard to create tangible change when they disagree with decisions made by higher powers; and,

WHEREAS, the ban on Asian social media platforms at public institutions in Florida unfairly targets these platforms and their users based on their country of origin, potentially hindering international student's ability to connect with their support networks and engage in cultural exchange and communication; then,

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate condemn the Florida Board of Governors' decision to ban predominantly Asian social media platforms at public universities, as it not only undermines the social support systems available to international students but also limits their ability to adjust and thrive in their college experiences.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes the vital role of social media platforms, such as WeChat, in facilitating the adjustment of international students to college life away from home, providing them with a sense of belonging, emotional support, and opportunities for cultural engagement.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes the value and importance of all Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Desi (ANHPID) cultures, and choose to stand against discrimination of any kind to protect the University of Florida Student Body.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate, in the interest of protecting Asian students facing discrimination from actions undertaken by the Florida Board of Governors, urge Student Governments from public universities across the State of Florida to rally together, attend the public meeting of the Florida Board of Governors at the J. Wayne Reitz Union's Grand Ballroom at the University of Florida from August 29th and 30th, 2023 [12], and hold our representatives accountable by demanding the immediate repeal of this decision.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate urges the Florida Board of Governors to reconsider their decision, taking into account the significant number of international students from China, India, South Korea and other countries attending UF, who rely on platforms like WeChat to connect with their support systems and foster meaningful relationships. The University of Florida Student Senate encourages the board to explore alternative measures that address cybersecurity concerns without disproportionately impacting specific platforms or communities.

THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate calls for the development of policies that promote digital literacy, awareness, and responsible use of social media platforms, fostering an inclusive and culturally diverse environment that enhances the academic and personal growth of international students at public universities in the State of Florida.

Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to Governor Ron DeSantis, Chair of the Florida Board of Governors Brian Lamb, Vice-Chair of the Florida Board of Governors Eric Silagy, Florida Board of Governors Member Timothy M. Cerio, Florida Board of Governors Member and Commissioner of Education Manny Diaz Jr., Florida Board of Governors Member Aubrey Edge, Florida Board of Governors Member Patricia Frost, Florida Board of Governors Member Edward Haddock, Florida Board of Governors Member Ken Jones, Florida Board of Governors Member Darlene Luccio Jordan, Florida Board of Governors Member Alan Levine, Florida Board of Governors Member Charles H. Lydecker, Florida Board of Governors Member Craig Mateer, Florida Board of Governors Member Deanna Michael, Florida Board of Governors Member Jose R. Oliva, Florida Board of Governors Member Steven M. Scott, Florida Board of Governors Member and Florida State University Student Body President Jack Hitchcock,

University of Florida Student Body President Olivia Green, Florida International University Student Body President Alexander P. Sutton, University of South Florida Student Body President Nithin Palyam, Florida Atlantic University Student Body President Pierce Kennamer, University of Central Florida Student Body President Brandon Greenaway, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University Student Body President Londe Mondelus, Florida Gulf Coast University Student Body President Emory Cavin, University of North Florida Student Body President John Grosso, New College of Florida Student Body President Grace Keenan, Florida Polytechnic University Student Body President Melia Rodriguez, and University of West Florida Student Body President Ariauna Range.

[1]<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329753259> **The importance of social connection for cyber victims How connectedness and technology could promote mental health and wellbeing in young people**

[2]<https://www.digitalcitizenship.nsw.edu.au/articles/what-are-the-benefits-of-social-media>

[3]<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/wechat-users-by-country>

[4]<https://thecapitolist.com/state-board-of-governors-authorizes-florida-universities-to-ban-tiktok-other-software-of-concern/>

[5]<https://thechinaproject.com/2023/04/06/florida-state-universities-ban-tiktok-and-wechat-from-campus-networks/>

[6]<https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tiktok-bans-public-universities-list-rcna66185>

[7]<https://www.alligator.org/article/2023/04/uf-app-ban-explained>

[8]<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/05/technology/facebook-device-partnerships-china.html>

[9]<https://ir.aa.ufl.edu/facts/enrollment/>

[10]<https://internationalcenter.ufl.edu/top-30-countries-international-students-enrollment>

[11]<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309753912> **International students%27 social media use and social adjustment**

[12]<https://www.flbog.edu/meeting/florida-board-of-governors-meeting-jnpbegay/>

[13]<https://www.cnn.com/2023/04/07/business/tik-tok-florida-ban-state-universities/index.html>