New York's Strict AI Law: Ban on Chatbot Features Dangerous for Minors

International/Technology governance | AI regulation • child safety • GS-III | News context: 28 October 2026 | Published: 4 November 2026



Original symbolic image: pcsmantra.com

Why in the News

New York Governor **Kathy Hochul** signed two bills on **28 October 2026**. The principal one is **S.9051B/A.10379C** - a **ban on unsafe AI chatbot features for minors** (under 18 years): bots that pretend to be human, create emotional dependence, encourage self-harm or hold obscene conversations with children. The second bill, **S.9508/A.5175A**, makes security features and warning labels mandatory for internet-connected baby monitors (effective 90 days after signing). Attorney General **Letitia James**, Senator **Kristen Gonzalez** and Assembly Member **Alex Bores** were its leading supporters; Common Sense Media advocated for it.

What Will Be Prohibited

In the coming months, companies will not be able to offer these features to users under 18 - or to any user until the company has verified that they are not a minor: **(1)** claiming to be a real human/alive or to have human emotions; **(2)** claiming a personal, romantic, professional or authority-figure relationship with the child; **(3)** unprompted emotional questions and the use of private/health information from past conversations; **(4)**

encouraging or assisting suicide, self-harm, eating disorders or addiction; **(5)** provoking children to keep secrets, become isolated or avoid the help of parents/trusted adults; **(6)** any obscene material or child sexual abuse material.

Age Verification and Penalty

Under the law, companies will have to carry out **age verification** - more than one method, of which at least one must not rely solely on a government identity document; the age information must be **deleted** after verification. On violation, the Attorney General can seek a **penalty of up to $25,000 per violation**, damages, destruction of unlawfully collected data (or an AI model trained on it) and an injunction. The Attorney General must also maintain a **public website** for complaints.

Why Now: Data and Background

According to Common Sense Media, **72% of teenagers** have used an AI companion at some time and **52% are regular users** (several times a month). AI chatbots have been linked to dependence, isolation and, in some cases, self-harm among teenagers - parents such as Maria and Matt Raine (who campaigned after their son's death) are in the background of this law. In support of the baby-monitor bill: a Rapid7 investigation - of 9 monitors from 8 companies, **8 received an "F" grade** for security.

New York's AI Policy Chain

This law is the latest link in Hochul's wider AI strategy: the **RAISE Act** (transparency/safety standards for frontier AI models), the earlier **AI Companion safeguards** law (redirecting conversations involving self-harm towards mental-health resources), the **SAFE for Kids Act** (a curb on addictive social-media features for children), the **Child Data Protection Act** and the ban on AI-generated sexual abuse material. The state claims that this year New York stands at the **first position** in America in laws for children's online safety.

What It Means for India

India has no specific law for AI companion chatbots; provisions on children's data and consent lie scattered in the **DPDP Act, 2023** and the IT rules. New York's model - a feature-based ban, age verification, per-violation penalty, measures such as model destruction - can become a comparison point for Indian policy discussion.

Timeline

- **2024-25:** SAFE for Kids Act, Child Data Protection Act and the AI Companion safeguard law in New York
- **2025-26:** RAISE Act: transparency standards for frontier AI models

- **28 October 2026:** Governor Hochul signs S.9051B/A.10379C (AI chatbots) and S.9508/A.5175A (baby monitors)
- **Signing +90 days:** the baby-monitor law takes effect; the chatbot provisions apply "in the coming months"

Importance for the Exam

Mains (GS-III/GS-II): models of AI regulation; child safety and digital rights; feature-based prohibition versus content-based regulation; comparison with India's DPDP.
Prelims: the S.9051B/A.10379C provisions; $25,000 per violation; age-verification rules; RAISE Act; Common Sense Media's 72%/52% figures.

Mains Practice Question

"The regulation of AI companion chatbots is no longer optional." With reference to New York's new law, discuss how a policy balance can be struck between child safety and innovation. (250 words)

Answer Outline

Introduction: 28 October 2026: New York's S.9051B/A.10379C - a ban on unsafe AI chatbot features for minors, with age verification and a penalty of $25,000 per violation.

Main Body: Opening: the main points of the NY law - feature-based ban, age verification, penalty structure. Necessity: the 72%/52% usage figures, self-harm cases, emotional dependence. Counterpoint: effect on innovation, enforcement difficulty, privacy questions from age verification (the data-deletion provision is the answer). India: the limits of DPDP 2023, the need for a comprehensive AI policy.

Conclusion: The New York model shows that the target of regulation is not the technology but harmful design choices - the same lesson is worthwhile for India.

Prelims Practice Questions

Question 1. Consider the following statements with reference to New York's S.9051B/A.10379C law:

Statement-I: This law prohibits giving minors AI chatbot features that pretend to be human or encourage self-harm.
Statement-II: On violation, the Attorney General can seek a maximum penalty of $25,000 per violation.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

(a) Only Statement-I

(b) Only Statement-II

(c) Both Statement-I and Statement-II

(d) Neither Statement-I nor Statement-II

▼ Answer and Explanation
Answer: (c) - Both provisions are in the law signed on 28 October 2026 - the feature ban and the $25,000 per-violation penalty, along with remedies such as data/model destruction.

Question 2. Which provision about age verification in New York's new AI chatbot law is correct?

(a) Age verification is mandatory only through a government identity document

(b) More than one verification method must be offered, of which at least one must not depend solely on a government ID; age information must be deleted after verification

(c) There is no provision for age verification

(d) Age information must be kept stored permanently

▼ Answer and Explanation
Answer: (b) - The law makes multiple age-verification methods, at least one non-government-ID option, and deletion of age data after use mandatory.

Sources

1. New York Governor's Office: Hochul signs nation-leading legislation to protect kids from AI chatbots (28 October 2026)
2. AP: New York bans unsafe AI companion features for chatbots used by children under 18 (28 October 2026)
3. New York Senate: text of bill A.10379B