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Apple investors call for action over iPhone ‘addiction’ among children

Open letter highlights growing concern that Silicon Valley is damaging youth and urges new parental controls, child protection committee and release of data.

Two of the largest investors in Apple are urging the iPhone maker to take action against smartphone addiction among children over growing concerns about the effects of technology and social media on the youth.

In an open letter to Apple on Monday, New York-based Jana Partners and the California State Teachers’ Retirement System (CalSTRS) said the firm must do more to help children fight addiction on its devices.

“There is a developing consensus around the world including Silicon Valley that the potential long-term consequences of new technologies need to be factored in at the outset, and no company can outsource that responsibility,” said the investors, who collectively control \$2bn of Apple stock.

“Apple can play a defining role in signalling to the industry that paying special attention to the health and development of the next generation is both good business and the right thing to do.”

The group urged Apple to offer tools to help children avoid addiction and give parents more options to protect their children’s health through monitoring usage.

Apple’s iOS already offers limited parental controls, including restrictions on apps, use of features such as location sharing and access to certain kinds of content.

But the investors said that Apple should allow parents to be able set the age of the user of the phone on setup, and implement limits on screen time, hours of the day the phone can be used and block social media services.

The investors cited several studies on the negative effects on children’s mental and physical health caused by heavy usage of smartphones and social media.

By Samuel Gibbs, adapted from *The Guardian*, January 2018