



October 19, 2023

The Honorable Governor Josh Shapiro
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Leader Jay Costa
535 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3033

The Honorable Speaker Joanna
McClinton
139 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-219

Dear Governor Shapiro, Leader Costa, and Speaker McClinton,

While we applaud the well-intentioned effort of SB 22, if enacted into law, this bill would cause harm to minors, especially teens from marginalized and vulnerable populations.

We worry that this bill would ultimately amount to a “digital book ban.” Earlier this year, Chamber of Progress released a [report](#) finding that the right-wing movement to ban books and censor what students see in schools has moved online.

Texas, Utah, Arkansas, and Louisiana have all enacted legislation seeking to limit teens’ access to information on the Internet using the same specious justifications underlying the curriculum censorship movement.

Both curriculum censorship and digital censorship efforts share common language in legislative texts and testimonies, often targeting LGBTQ+ and anti-racist content.

The same states pushing hardest for censorship in classrooms are seeking to limit the availability of specific content online – content that provides crucial affirmation and support to LGBTQ+ youth and other marginalized teens.

SB 22 is similar to the laws passed other states alluded to above. We are concerned that the bill lacks a clear, specific definition around “harm” to minors. This may be an avenue for extremist hate groups and others to sue social media platforms for minors being exposed to content opposite of their own ideology and beliefs.

1. For minors, social media connections can provide a lifeline. In the CDC’s latest [Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey](#), more than half (55%) of young people experienced emotional abuse in the home and more than 10% reported experiencing physical abuse in the home. A majority of adolescents [report](#) that social media helps them

feel more accepted (58%), like they have people who can support them through tough times (67%), like they have a place to show their creative side (71%), and more connected to what's going on in their friends' lives (80%).

The support social media offers from peers to mitigate stress can be especially important for youth who are often marginalized, including racial, ethnic, and sexual and gender minorities. For example, minors within the [LGBTQ+ community](#) use social media to find friends, seek emotional support, and search for information about their identities and health - especially those growing up in unsupportive families or communities.

2. There may be unintended consequences concerning the definition of “harm” to minors. We are concerned about SB 22 lacking a clearer, more specific definition around “harm” to minors. This may be an avenue for extremist hate groups and others to sue social media platforms for minors being exposed to content opposite of their own ideology and beliefs.

This provision will cause social media platforms to avoid litigation by over moderating, therefore censoring content with themes centered on race, history, sexual orientation and gender, and others that extremist hate groups and [right-wing think tanks](#) claim “harm” minors. This disproportionately impacts young people of color, as [social media has provided a platform for teens and students of color](#) to speak up against racial prejudice, with 82% of Black and Hispanic users stating that social media is effective for creating sustained social movements.

3. Other states that have passed this have done so with the aim of restricting youth's access to information about social justice, racial equity, and gender & sexuality. Additionally, Senator Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) [said](#) that one of the aims of similar federal legislation was “protecting minor children from the transgender in this culture.” Provisions of the bill aside, legislation similar to SB 22 that passed in [Florida and Texas](#) will soon face legal battles in the U.S. Supreme Court and there is not yet enough research to conclusively determine the impact of [Utah's Social Media Regulation Act](#) on minors.

For these reasons, **we strongly encourage you to oppose SB 22.**

Sincerely,

Chamber of Progress
ACLU of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Youth Congress
YouthFacts

Fight for the Future
LGBT Tech
Woodhull Freedom Foundation