



TECHNET
THE VOICE OF THE
INNOVATION ECONOMY

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March 29, 2021

The Honorable Representative Deborah Ruggiero, Chair
House Innovation, Internet and Technology Committee
Rhode Island General Court

RE: TechNet opposition to H.B. 6055

Dear Chair Ruggiero and Members of the Committee:

I write on behalf of TechNet to express our opposition to HB 6055, legislation which would place consumer data and privacy at considerable risk by requiring the practice of "sideloading," thereby causing irreparable harm to Rhode Island consumers.

TechNet is the national, bipartisan network of technology CEOs and senior executives that promotes the growth of the innovation economy by advocating a targeted policy agenda at the federal and 50-state level. Our diverse membership includes dynamic American businesses ranging from startups to the most iconic companies on the planet and represents over three million employees and countless customers in the fields of information technology, e-commerce, the sharing and gig economies, advanced energy, cybersecurity, venture capital, and finance.

By requiring "sideloading", which is the practice of downloading unvetted applications on to a connected device, HB 6055 would undermine a software platform's ability to provide a secure environment for its developer and user communities, which not only jeopardizes their intellectual property (IP) but also threatens the security and privacy of their consumers. The technology industry is fully committed to securing privacy and security for consumers and engages in a wide range of practices to provide consumers with control over their data. The success of our member companies hinges on their ability to build and maintain trust from their consumers, and choosing partners and platforms that ensure a secure environment is of paramount importance. HB 6055 would completely undercut those critical efforts and open up Rhode Islanders to new privacy and cybersecurity risks.

Within the context of mobile security, sideloading circumvents a device's operating system and adds an application that has not been approved. All applications on leading app stores, for example, are carefully vetted to eliminate security risks, which successfully prevents the vast majority of malicious apps from entering the environment and reaching the end-user. By contrast, sideloading allows access to apps that are unavailable in official app stores for any of a number of reasons, including those that risk a user's privacy and security. Once installed, these malicious apps expose users and their broader connected networks to nefarious threats. In an era of unprecedented and sophisticated cyberattacks, the government should not make it easier for criminals to hack Rhode Islanders by passing HB 6055.

Unfortunately, security threats are not the only risk, as IP may also be compromised. The ability of a device's operating system to provide a secure environment for developers and users is a key element of its offering and an important market distinction. Likewise, the official app store review process, which includes multiple checks to help prevent impacts to the

security and performance of the device, can be considered a trade secret. By requiring devices to enable sideloading, HB 6055 removes the ability of an operating system to secure its environment and diminishes a key market differentiator.

Today's software ecosystem increasingly depends on strong privacy, security, and IP protections at the platform level. Proposals that require platforms to allow circumvention of these protections through sideloading would harm consumers and app economy competitors alike. We strongly urge you to oppose HB 6055 and any similar attempts to undermine these critical protections.

Sincerely,



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