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March 11, 2021

Honorable Deborah Ruggerio Chair
House Innovation, Internet, and Technology Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Oppose HB 5564, Regulation of Social Media Websites

Dear Representative Ruggerio:

By way of introduction, the Internet Coalition (IC) is a national trade association that represents members in state public policy discussions. The IC also serves as an informational resource, striving to protect and foster the Internet economy and the benefits it provides consumers.

The IC respectfully **opposes HB 5564**, a bill that would subject an online service to civil liability for deleting or censoring a user's speech; conflicts with federal laws and penalizes online businesses from attempting to keep users safe.

IC members are committed to keeping users safe online while fostering diverse viewpoints and experiences for a variety of people. There is no standardized industry-wide approach for determining what constitutes potentially harmful or objectionable content as companies decide themselves what is appropriate and acceptable or objectionable content that they will or will not host.

Review of user content is done in an unbiased manner which is meant to identify and block harmful, obscene, violent or other types of objectionable content.

IC member companies are transparent about their content moderation processes which are detailed in website policies and/or terms of service. Users have the freedom to accept these terms or may choose to use alternative sites.

American free speech laws, including 47 U.S.C. § 230(c), allow websites to block content they reasonably consider harmful. This federal law states that Congress finds "the Internet and other interactive computer services offer a forum for a true diversity of political discourse, unique opportunities for cultural development, and myriad avenues for intellectual activity."

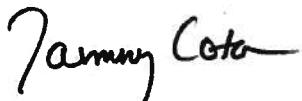
First Amendment protections also prevent state legislative bodies from passing laws that interfere with the rights of service providers to have the discretion to set and enforce rules about what content is and is not allowed on their service.

This bill would spawn excessive and endless litigation and leaves it up to Rhode Island courts to determine what content is religious, political or objectionable. That would push online

companies away from striving to provide a neutral environment while encouraging them to stop monitoring and blocking harmful content, creating an unsafe user environment.

For the reasons explained above, **IC respectfully opposes HB 5564**. Please contact me if you have questions or would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,


Tammy Cota

cc: House Innovation, Internet and Technology Committee members