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ACLU OF RI POSITION: AMEND

TESTIMONY ON 26-H 7350, RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW – GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS – ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE COMPANION MODELS April 8, 2026

The ACLU of Rhode Island generally supports this legislation which would require artificial intelligence (AI) companion technology to establish additional safety features to address users expressing suicidal ideation, or the potential for physical or financial harm to others. We have been watching closely the expansion and impact of emerging AI technology in various parts of life and consistently urge adequate safeguards surrounding its use.

While we support the goal of the bill, which is to prevent harm to the users or to others, we are concerned with the open-ended nature of the term “protocol.” This legislation requires the AI companion system to contain a protocol for addressing suicidal ideation, self-harm, or the potential for physical or financial harm to another. While we urge adequate safeguards around AI use, we also urge careful consideration about how these requirements are defined and implemented. Specifically, we are concerned that leaving “protocol” undefined could permit retention of user conversation logs, monitoring of users, and other intrusive tactics that would amount to a serious invasion of users’ privacy.

We have seen numerous reports where users have expressed these thoughts with the AI companion models they’re using. Establishing protocols that require retaining user logs or monitoring could adversely impact an individual’s willingness to engage with the AI model and further impede their willingness to seek support, especially for those that rely on an AI companion for an accessible support system. As such, we urge that any protocol for intervention incorporate safeguards that protect user privacy.

Thank you for considering our views.