



TESTIMONY OF GLBTQ LEGAL ADVOCATES & DEFENDERS

In Opposition to House Bill 7953

An Act Relating to Commercial Law -- General Regulatory Provisions -- Rhode Island

Social Media Regulation Act

House Innovation, Internet, & Technology Committee

April 8, 2026

Dear Chair Baginski, First Vice Chair Handy, Second Vice Chair Carson, and honorable members of the House Innovation, Internet, & Technology Committee:

My name is Elizabeth Rodriguez-Ross and I am a Staff Attorney at GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD Law). I write in **strong opposition** to H7953, An Act Relating to Commercial Law -- General Regulatory Provisions -- Rhode Island Social Media Regulation Act. This bill proposes a total ban on minors using social media, which poses a serious threat to the well-being of LGBTQ+ youth.

As you know, GLAD Law is New England's leading legal rights organization dedicated to working towards equality for LGBTQ people and people living with HIV. At GLAD Law, we are deeply committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of young people— and are particularly attuned to the needs of LGBTQ+ youth, who face unique challenges that H7953 is likely to exacerbate.

GLAD Law acknowledges and appreciates the importance of ensuring safety for all children in our increasingly digital world. For LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ youth alike, however, the bill threatens to limit access to residents' ability to fully express themselves online. Social media platforms allow many young people to learn about the world, foster community, become politically active, and find resources they may not otherwise be able to access. In its attempt to prevent exposure to explicit content, H7953 goes too far— overly burdening young people's ability to express themselves digitally and gather in virtual spaces.

Moreover, the incredibly stringent provisions of H7953 ultimately threaten to harm some of the most vulnerable young people. For LGBTQ+ youth, social media often serves as a way to find community and resources to support their identity discovery and exploration. Social media can be a lifeline for LGBTQ+ youth who are not out to their loved ones or who live in unsupportive homes.

This is particularly important because alarming numbers of LGBTQ+ youth suffer from serious mental health conditions. A 2024 report from the Trevor Project found that 37% of LGBTQ+ young people in Rhode Island “seriously considered suicide” in 2023. In that same year, 51% of LGBTQ+ young people in Rhode Island struggled with depression and 67% of LGBTQ+ young people in Rhode Island struggled with anxiety.¹

In addition to its constitutional problems, H7953 might not even be effective at protecting young people’s mental health and digital safety. A December 2025 Brookings Institute one-pager suggests that “there is little evidence that such bans are an effective solution” to the problems that current social media usage pose.² The bill might cause more issues than it is actually able to resolve.

Although we share H7953’s goal of ensuring youth safety online, this bill is overly broad and overly demanding. We respectfully request that the Committee not move this measure forward. Thank you for your time and consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or for additional information.

Respectfully submitted,



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¹ Nath, R. et al., *2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People by State*, The Trevor Project (2024), www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2024-by-state.

² Nicol Turner Lee et al., *How will bans on social media affect children?*, Brookings Institute (2025), <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-will-bans-on-social-media-affect-children/>.