



September 17, 2019

Chairwoman Michele Hoytenga and Members of the Committee on Communications and Technology
House of Representatives
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909

RE: HB 4801 - OPPOSE

Dear Chairwoman Hoytenga and Members of the Committee on Communications and Technology,

Internet Association (IA) respectfully OPPOSES HB 4801 which would impede internet companies' ability to moderate harmful online content and expose companies to enforcement action for regulating such content while truthfully stating that the company is viewpoint neutral, non-biased or impartial.

IA represents more than 40 of the world's leading internet companies, and advances public policy solutions that foster innovation, promote economic growth, and empower people through the free and open internet.

Under HB 4801, companies would not be able to remove any content without being subject to legal claims of bias. The bill will force companies to do one of two things: they will either stop monitoring content at all, allowing abhorrent and illegal content on their sites, or they will move away from being neutral platforms, creating an even more polarized internet.

For example, if a company removes content posted by a user because it is untrue, HB 4801 would prohibit the company from calling itself neutral or unbiased. If a company removes content because it is fraudulent or spam, HB 4801 would prohibit the company from calling itself neutral or unbiased. And if a company removes content because it is insulting a suicide victim, HB 4801 would prohibit the company from calling itself neutral or unbiased.

Legislation that threatens CDA 230 would make it harder, not easier, for platforms to police content we all agree should not be online. CDA 230 gives companies the ability to moderate their platforms in ways that go well beyond the letter of the law. Things like hate speech, which is legal under the First Amendment is banned by platforms. Without CDA 230, they would have a much harder time keeping that content down.

Companies review millions of pieces of content every day in order to remove harmful content. They work to do this in an unbiased manner, keeping their services open to a broad range of ideas. In the overwhelming number of cases, removal of offensive content is accomplished as intended. However, the volume of content (hundreds of millions of posts per day) ensures that AI and human reviewers in companies can't get it right 100% of the time.



Online platforms offer the most open and accessible form of communications for all Americans. The platforms themselves do not have a political ideology, and it would make no business sense for companies to stifle speech of their consumers. The companies we represent understand that their success depends on attracting a broad user base regardless of party affiliation or political perspectives. It is the best way for them to be inclusive and attract more users. This is core to the principles of free enterprise we all should encourage.

Internet companies have developed the most free and open platforms in history that accept viewpoints and affiliations from people all over the world. These companies continue to improve moderation practices to promote open healthy online discourse. HB 4801 would make content moderation more difficult without any benefit for users. For these reasons and more, we urge your opposition to HB 4801. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at colleen@internetassociation.org. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Colleen Daley".

Colleen Daley
Director, State Government Affairs, Midwest