



March 15th, 2023

Dear House Judiciary Committee:

I am a Rhode Island voter and representative from COYOTE RI writing to you today in strong opposition to

H5698 ""This act would allow for a civil action against parents of a student who demonstrate willful or wanton disregard for the parent's duty to supervise their child who has committed the offense of cyberstalking or cyberharassment"

The Supreme Court ruled in 1969 that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate. Therefore minors do have constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression online and this law would be unconstitutional.

H5698 violates the 1st Amendments of minors, and allows for frivolous lawsuits against parents over their children's online speech. A more reasonable solution is for parents to teach their children to block anyone online who is harassing them. The term cyberstalking is problematic, and needs to be better defined, following someone else on social media that has their settings set to "PUBLIC" could be considered cyberstalking. This will also allow wealthy parents to bring forth frivolous lawsuits against POOR parents that can not afford to hire an attorney.

We would rather see legislation introduced that would hold parents responsible for monitoring their children online, after giving them access to an electronic device. We are tired of legislators trying to censor the internet by claiming children are being traumatized on TikTok or that Instagram is ruining teenage girls' self esteem. The government is not a babysitter nor should the internet be PG. Parents can easily use "parental controls" to limit what their children can access online. Parents should also know who their children are engaging with online to protect them from predators.

When my daughter was 13 and started using the internet around 2002, she was not allowed to tell anyone her name, what city she lived in or what school she attended, and I checked her browser history and I had the passwords for her myspace account so I could monitor who she was communicating with.

We urge you to vote NO on H5698

Thank you for your consideration,

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