



**TECHNET**  
THE VOICE OF THE  
INNOVATION ECONOMY

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February 26, 2023

The Honorable Kristin Robbins  
Minnesota House of Representatives  
239 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Robbins,

I write to you today on behalf of TechNet in opposition to HF 1503 (Robbins), which effectively bans algorithms on the internet and would force every Minnesotan to hand over sensitive personal information just to use the internet.

*TechNet is the national, bipartisan network of technology CEOs and senior executives that promotes the growth of the innovation economy by advocating a targeted policy agenda at the federal and 50-state level. TechNet's diverse membership includes dynamic American businesses ranging from startups to the most iconic companies on the planet and represents more than five million employees and countless customers in the fields of information technology, e-commerce, the sharing and gig economies, advanced energy, cybersecurity, venture capital, and finance.*

This bill would seek to upend how the internet works in Minnesota. The fact is, the internet as we know it today runs on algorithms. Any sequence of code is an algorithm and almost all content on a website is "user generated." Every networked device depends on an electronic network built in part on algorithms. If enacted, this bill would turn social media into rubbish and users would be forced to see irrelevant content, as opposed to hobbies or crafts that users may be interested in.

In addition to the bill being unworkable, there are serious First Amendment issues resulting from the government determining what is harmful or inappropriate speech under this bill. Lawmakers have tried this before and have failed for similar reasons (See *Brown v. Entertainment Merchants* and *Ashcroft v. ACLU*). For example, it is permissible for companies to use algorithms to block "harmful or inappropriate content" but what is considered "harmful and inappropriate" varies vastly from each person.

The new age verification requirements in this bill are also problematic – resulting in capturing massive amounts of sensitive personally identifiable information. Because

of the significant penalties included in the bill, social media platforms would have no choice but to treat all users as if they are under the age of 18.

Companies would be forced to take draconian measures to comply with the age verification requirement. This would be done by either taking a photo of their driver's license or government issued ID – which again, includes a new collection of personal information not currently being collected by social media companies. Or companies would have to use facial recognition technology using artificial intelligence to verify the age of the account holder's legal guardian. It should also be worth mentioning that the biggest provider of age verification technology is a company called MindGeek, which is a massive, secretive company behind the website Pornhub.

While the goal of this bill is laudable, it will effectively force everyone to hand over tons of personal data to the folks who run Pornhub – just to use the internet. Age verification is unreliable and violates privacy rights of all Minnesotans.

The parental consent provision may also lead Minnesota youth to feel ostracized. Abusive parents may not allow their child to access social media. Many youth go to social media to feel welcomed or to further discover who they are or join certain communities. Minnesota's youth should still have that right.

The private right of action, coupled with vague terms and unclear compliance requirements will no doubt open up the door to potential lawsuit abuse. In addition to age verification requirements in the bill, companies would also have to collect new sensitive information on citizens of all ages, not just minors.

For these reasons we respectfully oppose this legislation.

Thank you,



Tyler Diers  
Executive Director, Midwest  
TechNet

Cc: Rep. Zack Stephenson, Chair