

LETTER: 90 civil rights and privacy organizations condemn ID-checking bills, citing effectiveness, censorship, and privacy concerns

To whom it may concern,

We, the undersigned organizations, write with great concern about the growing number of online ID check bills introduced in over 20 states and U.S. Congress. These bills encourage or require websites to perform ID checks on users under the guise of “child safety.” As a coalition of organizations dedicated to LGBTQ+ rights, abortion access, rights for youth, privacy, and freedom of speech, we believe that truly supporting and empowering kids online means fighting for their right to data privacy and antitrust legislation. We need the government fighting back against exploitative business practices, not demanding online ID checks or unilaterally deciding what content is “appropriate” for young people— these bills do just that.

ID checks endanger young people and other marginalized groups by collecting, storing, and managing incredibly sensitive information in ways prone to security breaches. From birth certificates, to drivers’ licenses, to facial and biometric data, requiring unique identification to access most websites could lead to a mountain of sensitive data routed through third-party age verification providers and massive databases. This kind of data is already regularly [leaked](#) as well as [combed through](#) by law enforcement without a warrant, leaving women, people of color, queer people, and kids particularly vulnerable to privacy violations and faulty identification.

Plus, many of these bills give lawmakers dangerously broad leeway in deciding which websites should be restricted as “harmful to minors.” While we all want to make sure kids have good experiences online, these ID check bills restrict everything from nudity to [“acts of homosexuality,”](#) using eerily similar rhetoric to the rightwing actors pushing to ban [drag shows](#) and books about [LGBTQ+ people and people of color](#) for being too “obscene.” With gender-affirming healthcare and abortion access under threat, and young people increasingly electrified around political action, ID check laws threaten young and marginalized people who would be cut off from access to lifesaving information and vital advocacy. After all, who’s to say that learning about the climate crisis or gun violence isn’t “harmful to minors”? As with everything from sex education to harm reduction, young people, especially marginalized youth, are better equipped, live longer, and do better when they have access to information and resources.

When ID check bills do pass, they don’t make the Internet safer, just less usable. While kids and others seeking blocked content are pushed onto even less moderated sites, those websites that do adopt online ID checks see [very few users actually complete them](#) and high costs to maintain their systems. The ease with which we click on a news article, log onto social media, or access our favorite sites could be gone overnight, replaced with an obstacle course of data scraping. For

vulnerable communities, a biometric scan or an ID upload can serve as a huge [obstacle](#), especially for low-income, unhoused, and undocumented people who already have to navigate an increasingly digital world, with less access to tech tools.

We call on lawmakers to invest in child safety without sacrificing digital privacy, freedom of information, or the very usability of the Internet. Instead of resorting to surveillance and censorship of our most marginalized communities, we need lawmakers to actually stand up to Big Tech and make substantive changes to protect people's privacy, bust Big Tech monopolies, and work toward true algorithmic justice. A free, fair, and accessible Internet depends on it.

Signed,

18 Million Rising

A Woman's Choice; Floridians For Reproductive Freedom; Black In Repro

Abortion Access Front

Abortion Action Missouri

Advocates for Youth

Aggie Fund

American Booksellers for Free Expression

API Equality-LA

Arkansas Black Gay Men's Forum

Assembly Four

Black and Pink National

Caribbean Equality Project

Center for Online Safety and Liberty

CenterLink: The Community of LGBTQ Centers

Copia Institute

Defending Rights & Dissent

Democratic Socialists of America's Queer Socialists Working Group

Don't Delete Art

EducateUS

Equality South Dakota

Erotic Service Provider Legal Education and Research Project

Fairness Campaign

Faith Choice Ohio

Fight for the Future

FL National Organization for Women

Food Empowerment Project

Freedom Network USA

Freedom Oklahoma

Ground Game LA
GSA Network
Harlem Pride, Incorporated
I need an a
If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice
Indivisible Bellingham
Indivisible Plus Washington
Indivisible Washington's 8th District
InterReligious Task Force on Central America
Jane's Due Process
Jewish Voice for Peace
Just The Pill
Kairos Action
Library Freedom Project
Maryland Communities United
Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition
Media Alliance
Mobile River Collective
Muslim Advocates
National Lawyers Guild
NorCal Resist
North Kitsap Indivisible
Northwest Abortion Access Fund
NTEN
Oakland Privacy
Old Pros
Olympia Indivisible
OpenMedia
Our Justice
PROMO Missouri
Rangoli Pittsburgh
Reproductive Freedom Collective Broward County
Reproductive Health Access Project
RootsAction.org
Secular Student Alliance
Secure Justice
Sex Worker Action Alliance
Shareable
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change
SiX Action

Snohomish County Indivisible
Solutions Not Punishment Collaborative
SPIRAL Collective
Surveillance Technology Oversight Project
T-time Transgender Support
The 6:52 Project Foundation, Inc.
The Organization for Transformative Works
The Support Ho(s)e Collective
The Transformation Project South Dakota
Trans Student Educational Resources
Transathlete
Transgender Education Network of Texas (TENT)
TransOhio
UltraViolet Action
University of Michigan Dearborn MSA
Viet Rainbow of Orange County
WA People's Privacy
Wallingford Indivisible
WebQ
Woodhull Freedom Foundation
Yale Privacy Lab
