

To: Judiciary Committee

From: Maine Youth Action, Cole Cochrane

Re: Testimony in support of LD 1705, An Act to Give Consumers Control over Sensitive Personal Data by Requiring Consumer Consent Prior to Collection of Data; Testimony in opposition to LD 1973, An Act to Enact the Maine Consumer Privacy Act



Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Cole Cochrane, I am a senior at Thornton Academy in Saco, and I am testifying on behalf of Maine Youth Action, a statewide youth advocacy group that represents hundreds of young Mainers from varying backgrounds. I am here to testify in support of LD 1705, An Act to Give Consumers Control over Sensitive Personal Data by Requiring Consumer Consent Prior to Collection of Data.

I have grown up in a society in which social media has had an overwhelming presence. From Instagram to Snapchat, we are constantly bombarded with content, advertisements, and influencers. Social media companies have pursued invasive strategies by collecting data on us, creating dangerously addictive algorithms, and influencing us with precisely targeted advertisements.

These algorithms, which in effect alter what we see and to what extent, extremely impair our freedom of choice. Freedom of choice requires all options and subsequent information to be available: we must have a choice about whether companies can collect our data and about what they do with it. Despite the conditions for such freedom, companies use our data to manipulate our choices, habits, behaviors, etc. This poses a direct threat to our youth, and as I have talked to dozens of youth about this issue, they agree with those sentiments too. It is imperative to start regulating the usage and type of data that is being collected, one of them being biometric data.

Biometrics are by far one of the most invasive and dangerous pieces of data that companies can collect from us. Unlike financial information or one's interests, biometrics are something one can not change. I think an application of biometric identifiers that concern the youth of our state the most is employee tracking. Companies are increasing the use of biometric identifiers to not only track when workers clock in or out, but closely monitor our activity. This is gravely concerning for two reasons: first, using our physical features is a deep invasion of privacy. Biometrics may include the use of our fingerprints, irises, voices, human faces, etc. Sensitive data like this has great potential to be misused by companies. It can be sold to other companies, who will then use it to manipulate consumers' choices. Biometric data is also at risk of being hacked by other entities, which means that sensitive data that we can not change will forever be exposed. Overall, the future generation is facing a precarious and dangerous workplace with the increasing use of biometrics. However, we have an opportunity to address this issue at hand.

I would like the committee to view our concerns of privacy invasion, exploitation of data and companies' potential use of our sensitive data as opposition to LD 1973.

In closing, young people in Maine are not able to vote on these issues. We count on adults and you, the legislature, to protect us now and to protect our future. By passing LD 1705, the state is doing as such. Therefore, I urge the committee for a motion of "ought to pass" on LD 1705.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to take any questions.