

To: Judiciary Committee

From: Maine Youth Action, Cole Cochrane

Re: Supporting LD 1945, An Act to Regulate Biometric Identifiers



Senator Carney, Representative Harnett, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Cole Cochrane and I am testifying on behalf of Maine Youth Action, a youth activist organization amplifying youth opinion. I am speaking today in support of LD 1945, An Act to Regulate Biometric Identifiers.

As a part of the youth, 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 ourselves, creating dangerously addictive algorithms, as well as 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 to be available, and to no degree shall be censored. 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 example that was quite astonishing was how it relates to advertising. As I was gathering some background on this bill, I actually came across a website that talked about biometric data. The website was offering guidance through this new type of data, and said the following: "using uniquely identifying consumer characteristics to associate each consumer with

his or her consumer behavior profile.” This alone indicates what these data points are being used for, and if companies still have the potential to use our physical features, it is only accelerating towards a future in which we have limited freedoms. However, we are at a significant moment, where we still have time to address this issue. The state has the moral obligation of protecting its citizens, and by passing LD 1945, the state is doing as such. Therefore, I urge the committee for a motion of “ought to pass” on LD 1945. Thank you for your time, and I am happy to take any questions.