

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS HENRY SANTANA, BREADON, COLETTA ZAPATA, CULPEPPER, DURKAN, FITZGERALD, FLYNN, LOUIJEUNE, MEJIA, MUPRHY, PEPÉN, WEBER, AND WORRELL



CITY OF BOSTON

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY SIX

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO ENSURE ACCESS TO LIFESAVING ONLINE RESOURCES FOR LGBTQIA+ AND OTHER MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES IN RESPONSE TO PROPOSED FEDERAL AND STATE DIGITAL CENSORSHIP LEGISLATION

WHEREAS, The City of Boston values and affirms the dignity, rights, and safety of LGBTQIA+ residents and all marginalized communities; *and*

WHEREAS, Online spaces and resources are essential lifelines for queer and trans youth, survivors of abuse, people seeking reproductive health care, and other vulnerable individuals, providing information, community, and support that may not otherwise be accessible; *and*

WHEREAS, Proposed legislation at the federal and state levels, including the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA), age verification requirements such as the SCREEN Act and the App Store Accountability Act, and attacks on Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, would severely limit access to these vital online resources; *and*

WHEREAS, KOSA, if enacted, could grant current and future presidential administrations, including those hostile to LGBTQIA+ rights, sweeping authority to censor LGBTQIA+ content under the guise of protecting minors, despite the opposition of youth and their parents, caretakers, and guardians; *and*

WHEREAS, More than one hundred Massachusetts parents of transgender children, along with hundreds of others nationally, have publicly expressed opposition to such censorship as it defies the best interest of the youth; *and*

WHEREAS, Mandatory age verification laws would require Internet users to upload government identification or submit to invasive biometric scans, creating barriers to access, undermining privacy, and disproportionately harming marginalized communities; *and*

WHEREAS, Weakening or repealing Section 230 would enable states with extreme anti-LGBTQIA+ or anti-reproductive rights laws to criminalize access to online content about abortion, gender-affirming care, and other constitutionally protected information, and would sever the connections local Boston LGBTQIA+

individuals hold with the broader LGBTQIA+ community upon censorship of online forums and exchanges by tech companies; *and*

WHEREAS, Protecting digital freedom is integral to safeguarding civil rights, ensuring equitable access to information, and promoting the well-being of all residents.
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to examine the impacts on LGBTQIA+ and other marginalized communities by proposed federal and state legislation, including KOSA, the SCREEN Act, the App Store Accountability Act, and attempts to weaken or repeal Section 230, and to explore how the City of Boston can protect online free expression, privacy, and access to lifesaving resources. Legal experts, community-based organizations, and impacted residents will be invited, and members of the public are encouraged to attend and testify.

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