



Testimony of Hope Ledford  
Policy Analyst  
Chamber of Progress  
Re: SB 394

**March 6, 2024**

Good afternoon Chair Humphries and members of the committee,

My name is Hope Ledford, and I am a Policy Analyst at Chamber of Progress, a tech industry association promoting technology's progressive future. Our partners include social media companies like Snap and Automattic, but they do not have a vote or veto over our policy positions. We advocate for safeguarding sensitive data and support comprehensive privacy concerns. We also strongly support making the internet safe for young people.

I'm here today in **opposition of SB 394**, which would compromise online privacy and disproportionately harm historically marginalized youth.

As written, SB 394 mandates covered companies to verify the identity and age of ALL users. Outsourcing to third parties doesn't diminish privacy concerns, but relocates it. Age estimation demands extra data, contradicting minimization efforts. This leaves many adults facing a dilemma: share personal data for access to protected speech or forego the service entirely.

SB 394 also aims to ban individuals under eighteen from specific internet sites, a significant privacy intrusion the courts have ruled unconstitutional. This overly broad ban jeopardizes free speech and isolates Kansas youth from essential connections, creative platforms, and vital resources. An open internet – free from government surveillance and censorship – is crucial for modern freedom of expression. While the state has valid concerns about internet-related harms, measures must not excessively encroach on First Amendment freedoms.

SB 394 could lead to private legal actions against internet companies by parents or guardians, potentially harming marginalized and at-risk youth. A majority of adolescents reported that online engagement offers acceptance, support during tough times, creative



outlets, and connection with friends. Moreover, LGBTQ+ youth rely on online platforms for support and information about their identities.

Lastly, requiring companies to collect extensive personal data from so many users could heighten cybersecurity risks, especially for services that cater to LGBTQ+ communities. Privacy violations online often lead to offline violence. In 2022, 54% of LGBTQ+ survey respondents reported experiencing severe harassment, including stalking, physical threats, and doxing.<sup>1</sup>

**SB 394 would prevent teens younger than 18 from accessing internet content without verifying their age and would jeopardize the privacy of all internet users and unfairly impact LGBTQ+ youth. These individuals have been consistently targeted by the legislative majority in recent years, and this legislation would perpetuate that harmful trend.<sup>2</sup>**

For these reasons, we encourage you to oppose SB 394.

Thank you,

Hope Ledford  
Policy Analyst  
Chamber of Progress

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2022-09/Online-Hate-and-Harassment-Survey-2022.pdf>

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<https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/kansas-lawmakers-spare-life-saving-care-for-transgender-youth-yet-override-most-of-governor-kellys-vetoes-of-legislation-targeting-lgbtq-kansans-once-again-submitting-to-extremism-and-perpetuating-hate>