



128 Dorrance Street, Suite 400
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-7171
Fax: (401) 831-7175
www.riaclu.org
info@riaclu.org

ACLU OF RI POSITION: OPPOSE

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO 23-H 5698, AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL OFFENSES -- COMPUTER CRIME March 16, 2023

The ACLU of Rhode Island opposes this bill, which would authorize a civil action against parents who demonstrate “willful or wanton disregard” in their exercise of “supervision and control” over a child who has committed the offense of cyberstalking or cyberharassment.

Parenting is difficult. In dealing with the aftermath of a delinquent offense committed by their child, parents should not have to further worry about being subject to a civil lawsuit in which their parenting skills will be dissected for a jury to decide whether they have sufficiently disregarded their parental supervisory responsibility to warrant an imposition of monetary damages.

We feel confident in saying that a judicial “remedy” like this for alleged poor parenting will in no way help either the parents or the child who committed the delinquent act in the first place. Rather, the expense of the litigation and the stress caused by a lawsuit like this are likely to only further exacerbate any tension and problems that exist in the family relationship. We are also concerned about the precedent it sets in making parents accountable civilly for a host of other delinquent activities committed by children.

We therefore urge the committee not to support this legislation.