

EARN IT Act Opposed by Broad Coalition of Civil Liberties Groups, Human Rights Advocates and Press Freedom Organizations

Below are excerpts from statements by the American Civil Liberties Union, Amnesty International, Freedom of the Press Foundation Human Rights Watch, Hacking/Hustling, and an additional 25 civil society groups including Demand Progress, Electronic Frontier Foundation, Fight For the Future, Free Press, LGBT Tech, Media Alliance and Oakland Privacy.

[American Civil Liberties Union](#)

“The bill undermines the privacy of every single American, stifles our ability to communicate freely online, and may jeopardize the very prosecutions it seeks to enable.

“...The EARN It Act will also chill vast amounts of protected speech online in two general ways. First, by undermining the privacy of communications, vulnerable people will not communicate freely. Protesters, domestic violence victims, and others that use encrypted communications to maintain safety will be afraid to speak if the EARN It Act becomes law. Second, the EARN It Act harms free speech by essentially mandating companies adopt overbroad content censorship and moderation practices.”

[Amnesty International](#)

“Forcing companies to provide ‘backdoors’ to the encryption deployed in their products or services (potentially affecting all users) constitutes a significant interference with users’ rights to privacy and freedom of expression. Given that such measures indiscriminately affect all users’ online privacy by undermining the security of their electronic communications and private data, Amnesty believes that they are inherently disproportionate and thus impermissible under international human rights law.”

[25 Civil liberties, press and tech freedom groups \(includes Demand Progress, Electronic Frontier Foundation, Fight For the Future, Free Press, LGBT Tech, Media Alliance, Oakland Privacy and more\)](#)

“EARN IT would harm ordinary users who rely on encrypted messaging, but would not stop bad actors.

“Amending Section 230 through the EARN IT Act ultimately would provide no significant benefit to law enforcement and would not be effective in addressing the crisis of

production and distribution of child sexual abuse material online. Instead, it would sacrifice the security and privacy of all Americans and leave them susceptible to online dangers. Therefore, we strongly oppose this bill.”

[Freedom of the Press Foundation](#)

Given that the Trump administration has shown a willingness to use any means to track down immigrants and punish its political enemies, why would any Democrat be willing to hand its Justice Department any new powers?

There are many ways to tackle the problem of child exploitation online without sacrificing the privacy and security millions of Americans rely on on a daily basis to protect themselves and their private information.

[Human Rights Watch](#)

“The EARN IT Act falsely suggests that we must choose between protecting children and protecting other fundamental rights, including privacy and free expression,” said [Hye Jung Han](#), child rights and technology researcher at Human Rights Watch. “Congress should instead adopt a rights-respecting approach to keep children safe online and protect their rights to access online spaces to learn, play, and socialize.”

[Hacking/Hustling](#)

“If you care about free speech, the sharing of knowledge, dissent and freedom of expression online, your fellow queer and trans sex workers of color, drug-using workers and harm reduction advocates, or political opponents of the current administration, you should care about smashing this proposed act.

“This act would create a massive new threat to anyone who does not wish to be surveilled by private companies, by letting their new cherry-picked committee certify whether websites are living up to new federal speech rules, ostensibly to protect children. But those rules could easily be used to limit speech about abortion, LGBTQAI peoples, harm reduction methods, criticism of law enforcement, and so on, especially when private companies are given the ability to decide what to do with expanded surveillance and liability.”