

**LEADERSHIP TEAM
2025 – 2026**



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September 17, 2025

Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor
State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: SB 771; Facilitation of Targeted Threats – Request for
Signature**

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the Association of University Women of California (AAUW of California), we write as co-sponsors of SB 771 (Stern) to offer our strong support and to request your signature on SB 771.

SB771 strengthens accountability from social media platforms and ensures that a platform may be liable for civil penalty if its algorithms aid or abet individual users who engage in the unlawful intimidation of others in online spaces.

While hateful speech is problematic, it is not illegal. However, it can cross the line into illegal action when this speech is inciteful and directly targets a person or a particular community.

Hateful speech becomes illegal when it threatens others. For instance, when hate speech is “brought to the doorstep” of marginalized communities, it is no longer protected speech, but unlawful intimidation, terrorism, and a threat. A person's hateful comments posted on their own Facebook wall is

protected speech. Maliciously posting threatening comments against a specific ethnic group or vulnerable community on their website or Facebook wall crosses the line into intimidation, just as this behavior would cross the line, becoming a hate crime by, for example, posting anti-Semitic propaganda on the physical door of a Jewish person's home or a temple.

While social media platforms are not responsible for the speech of individual users, aspects of social media platforms, such as algorithms or AI, can be complicit in not only the intensification of hateful beliefs but also their proliferation across a given platform. This includes being complicit in the unlawful targeting of marginalized groups.

AAUW of California believes SB 771 is a critically important measure, especially at this snapshot in time as our society grapples with political factors that heavily impact and seek to diminish safeguards established by responsible corporate cultures to mitigate the impacts of hateful content and protect historically targeted groups on those platforms. Most recently, in January of 2025, Meta announced that it would be dramatically altering practices on Facebook and Instagram that provide appropriate monitoring and the removal of targeted, threatening content.

Regardless of a social media platform company's motivation in reducing or removing practices that cull out targeted, threatening content, the fact remains that this decision, and those of other companies that choose to facilitate illegal, threatening content delivery to intended targets by simply turning a blind eye, makes them culpable in aiding and abetting illegal behavior.

These companies have not "failed" to provide safeguards, they **have intentionally turned away from providing safeguards they previously provided** for targeted vulnerable communities and should be held accountable for that decision, particularly considering the real-world impacts of the proliferation of online hate and their complicity in unlawful intimidation.

AAUW of California is pleased to co-sponsor this very timely and essential legislation, and respectfully request your signature on SB 771. If you have any questions regarding our position on this measure, please contact our Advocate in Sacramento, Kathy Van Osten, at 916-605-9293 or by email kvanosten@mvmstrategy.com. Thank you in advance for your favorable consideration of this measure.

Sincerely,



Amy Horn
Public Policy Co-Chair
AAUW of California



Melissa Maceyko
Public Policy Co-Chair
AAUW of California

Cc: Senator Henry Stern