

December 10, 2018

Via E-Mail & First Class Mail

New York City Council  
250 Broadway  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Council Member:

We, the undersigned civil rights, community, privacy, and advocacy organizations are writing to urge your support for legislation that would enhance privacy protections for New York City cable customers.

Intro. 1101, introduced by Council Member Peter Koo at request of the Mayor, would establish meaningful privacy protections for cable broadband subscribers. It would require cable broadband providers to obtain consent from customers before they collect, use, and disclose personal information, and give consumers the right to access and delete the data collected on them. The bill would further mandate regular reporting, require timely notifications in case of data breaches, and provide mechanisms for customers and the City to hold companies accountable for violations.

This bill is particularly important given privacy setbacks at the national level. In 2017, Congress and the Trump administration eliminated privacy regulations on internet service providers (ISPs) through the Congressional Review Act. This repeal has left a gaping hole in the rights of internet users by allowing the invasive collection and sharing of their web traffic. It is incumbent on local governments to step in and do what the federal government will not by mandating protections for consumers' digital privacy.

Currently, ISPs can track and sell user data without any notice or consent. Unbeknownst to customers, their browsing activities generate data that can make them the subjects of intrusive analysis and produce valuable information that ISPs can turn into profit. The bulk of one's web activity collected and analyzed can disclose sensitive information such as age, gender, race, profession, education, socioeconomic status, banking details, political activities, sexual orientation, recreational interests, religious beliefs, personal relationships, health condition, substance use, presence at home, and travel plans. The inferences that can be drawn from invasive and non-consensual online tracking can lead to discrimination and increase inequality through digital redlining, predatory marketing, and socioeconomic exclusion.

Intro. 1101 is a first step toward protecting New Yorkers from pervasive surveillance of their online activities. We respectfully ask your support for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

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