

DPSFV.com

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

March 20, 2022

RE: DPSFV Supports Assembly Bill 587 (Gabriel) Social Media Transparency

Representatives of the Honorable San Fernando Valley Delegation

On behalf of the Democratic Party of the San Fernando Valley (DPSFV), we are pleased to report that our Executive Board voted to support AB 587, which would require social media platforms to publicly disclose their corporate policies regarding online hate/racism, disinformation, extremism and harassment, as well as key metrics and data around the enforcement of those policies.

In recent years, there has been growing concern around the role of social media in promoting hate speech, disinformation, conspiracy theories, violent extremism, and severe political polarization. These platforms have been widely implicated as venues for hate groups to safely grow. A recent study of Twitter posts from 100 U.S. cities found that the greater proportion of tweets related to race- and ethnicity-based discrimination in a given city, the more hate crimes were occurring in that city. Robert Bowers, accused of murdering 11 elderly worshippers at a Pennsylvania synagogue in 2018, had been active on Gab, a Twitter-like site used by white supremacists. A GLAAD study in 2021 reported that 64 percent of LGBTQ social media users polled stated that they had experienced harassment and hate speech at a much higher rate than other identity groups on social media. Investigations have also shown that the violent riots at the Capitol in early January of 2021 were abetted and encouraged by posts on social media sites.

DPSFV was founded in 1978 and is chartered by the Los Angeles County Democratic Central Committee. Our organization is the coordinating body for a coalition of twenty-one Democratic Clubs located in the six Assembly Districts (38, 39, 43, 45, 46, and 50) which are wholly or partially in the San Fernando Valley.

The DPSFV Political Action Committee met last month to discuss AB 587 and voted to recommend that the DPSFV Executive Board support this vital piece of legislation. The committee noted that, lack of accountability for social media platforms severely affects a wide range of marginalized communities – including but not limited to people of color, women, the LGBTQ+ community, Jewish and Muslim communities, and people seeking reproductive justice – who are disproportionately targeted by online hate and adversely affected by misinformation and social media.

Despite the widespread nature of these concerns, efforts by social media companies to self-police have been widely criticized as opaque, arbitrary, biased, and inadequate. While some platforms share limited information about their efforts, the current lack of transparency has exacerbated concerns about the intent, enforcement, and impact of corporate policies, and deprived policymakers and the general public of critical data and metrics regarding the scope and scale of online hate and disinformation. Additional transparency is needed to allow consumers and the public to make informed choices about the impact of these platforms and so that researchers, civil society leaders, community advocates, and policymakers can determine the best means to address this growing threat.

For these reasons, DPSFV urges you to support this bill. Please note that DPSFV will be tracking this bill as it travels through the Legislature. Your voting record will be noted and may be considered should you ever seek our endorsement. Your office is always welcome to contact DPSFV if you have any questions.

Sincerely and respectfully,



Chair Sean M. Rivas
Democratic Party of the San Fernando Valley