

Chairwoman Flexer, Chairman Fox, Vice Chair Haskell, Vice Chair Winker, Ranking Member Sampson, Ranking Member France and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee,

My name is Sean O'Brien and I am a lifelong resident of Connecticut, a product of its secondary and higher education system, and a proud Nutmegger and citizen of the Elm City. I am also the founder of Yale Privacy Lab and Lecturer in Law at Yale Law School, where I teach cybersecurity. It is with concerns of digital privacy and cybersecurity that I am offering this testimony in support of HB 7392.

Data breaches are a daily occurrence, affecting all Americans and certainly the residents of Connecticut. As the scope and frequency of these breaches grows, it is vital to take a strong stance against unnecessary disclosure of personal and political information. HB 7392 is a first, but extremely important, step in safeguarding voter information from predatory and avaricious practices. HB 7392 is in line with the growing desire of the polity for more privacy and less surveillance, embodied in legislation now before other state bodies such as California AB 375.

Our work at Yale Privacy Lab has proven that every available avenue for surveillance by the advertising industry will be exploited. Our TVs, our smartphones, our cars, and even our thermostats and lightbulbs are the frontiers of privacy invasion. The State of Connecticut has an obligation to protect the privacy of its citizens in this digital battleground. Protecting voter information is a first step, and one that I and other privacy advocates hope will be expanded upon. The disclosure of voter information that may seem harmless can have dire and very real effects on the lives of Connecticut residents, especially when that data is correlated with rich digital profiles from data brokers across the Internet. Data is a toxic asset, a very useful and potent substance that gets more dangerous and erodes over time. Powerful actors on the public Internet and the Dark Web, such as nation-state actors and intelligence services, make the danger all the more real.

I hope that the State of Connecticut will pass HB 7392 to protect voter privacy and, in the days and years to come, continue to expand the privacy rights of its citizens.

Thank you for your time.

Sean O'Brien

Lecturer in Law, Yale Law School  
Founder and researcher, Yale Privacy Lab