|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| General Assembly |  | ***Committee Bill No. 6410*** | |
| ***January Session, 2023*** |  | LCO No. **5277** | |
|  | | \*05277HB06410GAE\* | |
| Referred to Committee on GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS | | |  |
| Introduced by: | | |  |
| (GAE) | |  | |

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A WORKING GROUP CONCERNING SAFE ONLINE PRACTICES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a safe online practices working group to assess and make recommendations related to addressing harassing, abusive or threatening behavior on online social media platforms. Such assessment shall include, but need not be limited to, (1) studying the short-term and long-term effects of harassing behaviors online on elected officials, public officials and residents of this state, (2) studying what state or municipal action is needed to address negative online behaviors that consider a citizen's right to freedom of speech versus an individual's right to be free from harassment, including, but not limited to, potential changes in state law concerning additional penalties or enforcement of online harassment, and (3) establishing guidelines for the reporting of online harassment of elected state and municipal officials that find a balance between making elected officials accessible to the people whom they serve and protecting them from abusive, offensive or threatening online harassment.

(b) The working group shall consist of the following members:

(1) Three appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom has expertise in social media company standards and the technical capabilities of such companies, one of whom is a professor at an institution of higher education who has expertise in first amendment rights and one of whom is a member of the House of Representatives;

(2) Three appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, one of whom is a sworn member of a municipal law enforcement agency, one of whom is a sworn member of the State Capitol Police and one of whom is a member of the Senate;

(3) Two appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a representative of an organization protecting civil liberties and one of whom is a representative of an organization representing municipalities;

(4) One appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, who is an unpaid municipal official;

(5) Two appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a member of federal law enforcement and one of whom is a member of the House of Representatives;

(6) Two appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, one of whom is a psychologist with expertise in the human impact of hate speech and harassing behaviors and one of whom is a member of the Senate;

(7) The executive director of the Freedom of Information Commission, or a designee;

(8) The Chief State's Attorney, or a designee; and

(9) The Attorney General, or a designee.

(c) Any member of the working group appointed under subdivision (1), (2), (3), (4), (5) or (6) of subsection (b) of this section may be a member of the General Assembly.

(d) All initial appointments to the working group shall be made not later than thirty days after the effective date of this section. If any appointments under subdivisions (1) to (6), inclusive, of subsection (b) of this section have not been made by the appointing authority thirty-one days after the effective date of this section, the chairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to government administration shall jointly fill any such appointment. Any vacancy other than the initial appointment shall be filled by the appointing authority.

(e) The speaker of the House of Representatives and the president pro tempore of the Senate shall select the chairpersons of the working group from among the members of the working group. Such chairpersons shall schedule the first meeting of the working group, which shall be held not later than sixty days after the effective date of this section.

(f) The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to government administration shall serve as administrative staff of the working group.

(g) The working group shall conduct at least one public hearing to solicit testimony from the public.

(h) Not later than February 1, 2024, the working group shall submit a report on any findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to government administration and planning and development, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, including, but not limited to, any recommended changes in state law and guidelines developed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section. The working group shall terminate on the date that it submits such report or February 1, 2024, whichever is later.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections: | | |
| Section 1 | *from passage* | New section |

***Statement of Purpose:***

To establish a working group to study the issue of online harassment of individuals and make recommendations concerning necessary changes in state law to penalize online harassment of individuals and guidelines for reporting online harassment of municipal and state-elected officials.

***[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Co-Sponsors: | REP. LEEPER, 132nd Dist.; REP. KEITT, 134th Dist.  REP. KAVROS DEGRAW, 17th Dist.; REP. PARIS, 145th Dist.  REP. BERGER-GIRVALO, 111th Dist.; REP. WELANDER, 114th Dist.  REP. ROSARIO, 128th Dist.; REP. PALM, 36th Dist.  REP. TURCO, 27th Dist. |

H.B. 6410