



Senator Angelique V. Ashby, 8th Senate District

SB 50 – Survivor’s Digital Safety Act

Safeguarding survivors of digital harassment and empowering domestic violence survivors

SUMMARY

SB 50 combats digital harassment by mandating that companies swiftly sever online access to devices and accounts shared with victims. This will provide immediate relief to individuals who are being harassed online and prevent further abuse or control by the perpetrator.

This bill also expands the scope of harassment covered under restraining orders to include digital harassment through connected devices and online accounts – ensuring that California’s legal framework keeps pace with the evolving nature of harassment.

BACKGROUND

The National Domestic Violence Hotline reports that one in four women and one in seven men are survivors of severe domestic violence in their lifetime. An average of 24 people per minute are survivors of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in the United States — more than 12 million women and men over the course of a single year. Almost half of all women and men in the US have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner in their lifetime.¹

In 2022, the Federal Government passed the Safe Connections Act, a bill that protects the safety and privacy of domestic violence survivors by requiring mobile service providers to sever a line of a survivor, and any individual in the care of the survivor, from a shared mobile service contract with a perpetrator.

Domestic violence experts and the Federal Communications Commission point to the Safe Connections Act as a framework for further legislation to expand the rights of survivors with other types of technology², and this bill takes the lead on a necessary expansion of the Federal Safe Connections Act by adding connective devices, apps, and online accounts.

THE PROBLEM

While the Federal Government and California have made significant progress in supporting survivors of domestic violence, critical gaps remain when it comes to the protection of digital spaces.

As technology has advanced, so too have the tactics used by domestic abusers. With most of us relying heavily on digital devices and networked systems in our everyday lives, these tools (intended to simplify our routines) can also become instruments of abuse, harassment, and control.³

Domestic violence organizations have reported a sharp increase in cases involving connected home devices and shared accounts. Survivors are expressing growing concern about losing control of Wi-Fi-enabled devices like doors, cameras, speakers, thermostats, and lights. Even when an abuser has left the home, these devices often remain accessible, continuing to be used as tools of intimidation and surveillance, leaving survivors vulnerable long after they’ve left the individual.⁴

THE SOLUTION

SB 50 is a critical measure designed to protect domestic violence survivors from digital abuse and control, ensuring that California law adapts to the evolving landscape of technology while continuing to empower and safeguard survivors.

Once verified that a covered act has been committed against the survivor and the device is under their exclusive control, account managers must grant a device protection request, blocking the perpetrator’s access to the survivor’s connected devices.

This bill offers a vital mechanism for survivors to regain control over their devices and, by extension, their safety and autonomy in the face of digital abuse.

¹ [The National Domestic Violence Hotline](#)

² [FCC Chair Proposes Expansion of Safe Connections Act to Cover Internet-Connected Cars](#)

³ [The Predator in Your Pocket. A Multidisciplinary Assessment of the Stalkerware Application Industry](#)

⁴ [Thermostats, Locks and Lights: Digital Tools of Domestic Abuse](#)

SUPPORT

- Alliance for HOPE International (Sponsor)
- 3Strands (Sponsor)
- California District Attorneys Association
- Oakland Privacy
- Sacramento Regional Family Justice Center
- San Francisco Safehouse
- Secure Justice
- WEAVE

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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