

Comment Report

HSB 12

A bill for an act relating to judicial motions and causes of action arising from a person's participation in matters of public significance.

Subcommittee Members: Hite-CH, Bohannon, Westrich

Date: 01/13/2021

Time: 04:00 PM

Location: RM 102, Sup. Ct. Consult

Name: Pete McRoberts

Comment: Hon. Representatives Hite, Bohannon, and Westrich: Lawsuits that are designed to chill free speech and punish critics of government agencies have no place in a free society. While we strongly support equal access to the judicial system for people to resolve their differences, a "Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation" is nothing more than a private abuse of the public Courts system. The ACLU fervently supports people's rights to express their opinion, free from government interference or censorship. Private parties improperly using the judicial and legal system to stifle free speech frustrates the purpose of the First Amendment. For that reason, we applaud your considering of AntiSLAPP legislation and strongly support it. Finally, people should be aware that an antiSLAPP law will never limit traditional access to the Courts for people who believe they have been defamed by someone else. Just as free speech should not be stifled through improper use of the legal process, access to the Courts must always be protected, so the Courts can do their job namely, to resolve differences between people in an equal and fair manner. AntiSLAPP legislation is strong move, to return the Courts to their traditional role of doing just that, while strengthening the First Amendment rights of all Iowans, no matter their opinion or ideology. Thank you, Pete McRoberts
Policy Director
American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa