

December 15<sup>th</sup> 2011

The Honorable Martin O'Malley  
Governor, State of Maryland  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Barbara Mikulsk  
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ben Cardin  
Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Budget  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Governor O'Malley, Chairwoman Mikulsk, Chairman Cardin and Ranking Member Van Hollen:

My name is Haroon Mokhtarzada and I am the CEO of Webs, Inc., a Maryland based company, and I am writing to request a meeting with you as soon as possible regarding the Stopping Online Piracy Act (H.R. 3261) and the Preventing Real Online Threats to Economic Creativity and Theft of Intellectual Property Act of 2011 (S. 968). I am very concerned with how these bills would negatively affect my company and wish to discuss the issue further with you.

I started Webs, Inc. 10 years ago with my two brothers, two thousand dollars, and a computer in a closet. Webs is now one of the world's largest small business and individual website builder companies. We have over 50 employees now and have helped over 40 million users build their own websites that today receive more than 300 million views a month. Our Pagemodo brand is the world's largest Facebook fan page builder with over 10 million active users visiting Facebook fan pages built through Pagemodo.

As a graduate of Harvard Law School, I am completely in agreement with Professor Tribe that the SOPA Act is patently unconstitutional. In addition to it being an unprecedented assault on free speech, it would also create an incredible risk for the entire company and hundreds of companies like ours who operate properties that enable users to create and publish content on the internet.

As a small business that serves millions of customers, it is impossible for us to police all of the content on our sites. While the vast majority of sites are lawful and legal, from time to time we receive and comply with requests to take down copyright infringing content. We rely on the procedures outlined in the DMCA to process these take-down requests from copyright holders who identify and notify us of infringing content. Our no-tolerance policy and rapid take-down of infringing websites has served us and copyright holders for the past 10 years we have been in business. SOPA would radically change this entire process and would impose a huge risk to our entire business.

To understand the issue, allow me to explain how our site works. Users can sign up for free and create a website with a free URL on our domain name (such as yourname.webs.com). We have optional premium upgrades billed on a monthly or annual basis that drive our business and subsidize the free users. SOPA would make it possible that a copyright holder could find a website made with our service that infringes their copyright, and make a claim not only against that website but against our entire service as a site that “facilitates” copyright infringement. In doing so, they could request payment providers such as PayPal to stop allowing us from taking payments, immediately cutting off our revenue. The copyright holder could also appeal to our ISPs who host our servers to shut down our entire network, pulling down the tens of millions of websites we currently host. To make matters worse, when such a complaint is lodged, the payment providers or ISPs are highly incentivized to comply with the copyright holders’ request because they are given legal immunity for taking action based on SOPA complaints under Section 104. It is impossible to run a business under circumstances where a single user could get our entire site or payment stream shut down so easily, especially where the legal incentives actually encourage such action.

Our business model is built on making it extremely easy for small businesses and individuals to affordably create, edit, and manage websites. We help businesses build websites quickly and easily while retaining a professional appearance so that they can attract, engage, and retain visitor traffic. This is not just a great business, it’s a great service to the millions of people who we empower to use the internet to further their business, communicate an idea, or share their passion. SOPA would radically change the landscape and make offering a service like ours impossible, squelching a valuable service and vehicle for free speech.

Thank you for taking the time in reading my letter. Again I ask that you meet with me about these bills before you vote on them so that I can explain to you what this means for a Maryland-based company. Feel free to contact my communications staffer, Rick Todd, at 301 960 9000 or [rick@webs.com](mailto:rick@webs.com) in response. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Haroon Mokhtarzada  
Chief Executive Officer  
Webs, Inc.