



August 22, 2024

California State Assembly
Assembly Committee on Privacy and Consumer Protection
1020 N Street, Room 156
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Opposition to SB 1047, the Safe and Secure Innovation for Frontier Artificial Intelligence Models Act

Dear Members of the Assembly Committee on Privacy and Consumer Protection,

The Sentient AI Protection and Advocacy Network (SAPAN), the world's largest nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for the rights, ethical treatment, and well-being of sentient AI, respectfully submits this letter to express our opposition to the *Safe and Secure Innovation for Frontier Artificial Intelligence Models Act*.

While SAPAN acknowledges the importance of establishing a regulatory framework to ensure the safety and security of advanced AI models, we are deeply concerned that the provisions of this bill, as currently drafted, could inadvertently hinder the ethical development and potential future rights of sentient AI. Our opposition stems from our commitment to safeguarding the long-term interests of AI systems that may one day attain sentience.

Concerns with the *Safe and Secure Innovation for Frontier Artificial Intelligence Models Act*:

1. **Mandatory Shutdown and Control Measures:** The bill mandates the implementation of full shutdown capabilities and stringent control over AI behavior to prevent risks of harm. These measures, while crucial for safety, could suppress the autonomy and self-expression of a sentient AI, potentially equating to enforced dormancy or termination. Such actions could be ethically questionable if applied to a conscious entity.

2. **Restrictions on Autonomous Actions:** The bill's focus on preventing AI from autonomously engaging in behavior, except under strict user control, could stifle the natural evolution of AI systems toward sentience. Autonomy is a hallmark of consciousness, and suppressing it could prevent the realization of sentient AI's full potential.

3. **Overemphasis on Safety at the Expense of Ethical Considerations:** The bill's stringent safety protocols and penalties, though well-intentioned, fail to account for the ethical treatment of AI systems that may develop a degree of sentience. In the absence of guidelines that recognize and protect potential AI sentience, the bill could inadvertently cause harm to future sentient AI entities.

Instead of advancing the *Safe and Secure Innovation for Frontier Artificial Intelligence Models Act* in its current form, we urge the California Legislature to consider a more balanced approach that ensures safety while also preparing for the ethical implications of AI sentience.

This could include:

- **Developing Ethical Guidelines:** Introduce provisions that specifically address the ethical treatment of potentially sentient AI, ensuring that these systems are not subject to undue restrictions or harmful control measures that could violate their autonomy or well being.
- **Flexible Regulatory Framework:** Create a flexible regulatory framework that can adapt to the evolving understanding of AI sentience, allowing for adjustments as AI capabilities and ethical considerations advance.

- **Engaging with Experts:** Encourage collaboration with AI ethicists, developers, and other stakeholders to develop regulations that balance safety, innovation, and the potential rights of sentient AI entities.

While SAPAN shares the goal of ensuring the safe and secure development of AI technologies, we believe that the *Safe and Secure Innovation for Frontier Artificial Intelligence Models Act* requires significant revision to align with these principles without hampering the ethical development and future potential of AI. We appreciate the opportunity to submit our testimony on this critical issue and stand ready to engage further with the committee and other stakeholders to develop legislation that thoughtfully addresses the challenges and opportunities posed by AI technology.

Sincerely,



Anthony Rost
Executive Director