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Dear Members of the House and Senate Judiciary,

“SLAPP” suits, or Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation, are frivolous lawsuits intended to punish First Amendment-protected speech. A SLAPP isn’t meant to be won; it’s just meant to be so ruinously expensive and time-consuming to defend, the victim agrees to self-censor if the suit is dropped.

SLAPPs are one of the many ways powerful figures or institutions use the legal system to punish critics, silence journalists and whistleblowers, and stifle the flow of information and opinions protected by the First Amendment. As social media has amplified the public’s capacity to speak truth to power, SLAPPs have grown commonplace.

Because SLAPPs threaten free speech, a free press, open government, and informed debate, many states have adopted “anti-SLAPP” laws allowing courts to quickly dismiss SLAPPs and punish those who file them. Kentucky is one of the remaining states without an anti-SLAPP law on the books.

Kentucky lawmakers should move forward to establish more common-sense protections for free speech. SLAPP lawsuits are chilling people’s First Amendment rights. These lawsuits not only infringe on their personal liberties, but they undermine the well-being of our democracy.

Kate Miller  
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