

Written Representation 158

Name: Roses of Peace

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Dear Select Committee,

I'm writing this email to you to share the plans we at Roses of Peace have come up with in support of the Fake News bill and would like to send the following proposal to the Select Committee on Fake News.

We strongly believe that as a ground-up youth-focused initiative, we can play a crucial role to reach out to a wider youth populace to raise awareness and educate them.

Thank you.

Roses of Peace Proposal to Select Committee on Fake News

Fake news is a destructive force in the digital age: It exploits social fault lines and undermines racial and religious cohesion. There should be action taken not just through legislation and government policy but through ground-up initiatives by citizens and civil society. Currently, the government has taken the lead role to counter fake news but this effort can at times be viewed with suspicion. The missing piece is the participation of citizens. There needs to be a concerted partnership between the government and responsible citizens to counter the growth of fake news.

Citizens are the missing piece in the equation to tackle fake news.

Citizens need to be equipped with the knowledge and tools to be able to deal with fake news from the ground. We need to take ownership and understand the damage that fake news can do to our community and social well-being. This is where Roses of Peace can play a role to develop a ground-up initiative as one of the rallying points to engage our fellow citizens to have a stake in pushing back against fake news.

Roses of Peace (ROP) is a ground-up, non-profit organisation that is committed to building a cohesive, empathetic and resilient Singapore. As an organisation, we believe we can play a role rally fellow citizens to take a stand against fake news and to safeguard the racial and religious cohesion that we have painstakingly built over the years.

2-tiered Approach to Tackle Fake News

1. Develop a Digital Playbook to Equip Citizens with the Requisite Knowledge and Tools

ROP will adopt a 2-tiered approach to counter the spread and proliferation of fake news. The first approach will be to address the spread of fake news in the online sphere, where we will develop a digital playbook, together with our partners, to educate and equip fellow citizens with the knowledge and tools to counter fake news.

The digital playbook will detail the strategies that ordinary citizens can adopt to identify and push back on fake news. For example, this will include simple steps citizens can take when they receive a fake news report and ways they can respond to divisive content online. We will work with our partners to develop scalable online programmes to share the playbook with a wide reach of netizens. Further details of the digital playbook can be shared subsequently.

2. Leveraging the ROP Network to Increase Awareness and Conversations Around Fake News

To complement this, we will leverage on our network to increase the awareness and conversations around fake news in both the online and offline space. ROP recently launched its inaugural ROP Ambassador Programme, which is a signature initiative to build the future leaders and peace-builders of tomorrow. As part of the one-year programme, the 30 selected Peace Ambassadors will receive training on digital media engagement and facilitation skills, which they will be called upon to use in helping identify and tackle dissemination of fake news. We believe that the 30 Ambassadors can serve as catalyst to help bring greater attention to fake news reports, and together with support from the government and our partner organisations, can help develop suitable media content to push back against the spread of these fake news reports.

To supplement this, we plan to launch the ROP Advocates Network, where we will work with different constituencies to train citizens to be peace advocates and help counter fake news that affects our racial and religious harmony. These youths can work within the IRCC networks in each constituency and develop themselves as 'influencers' to help others to address fake news. ROP will organise a one-day training workshop to train this group of advocates on core skills to play this role effectively. To start, we will pilot this with a small number of constituencies that we are already working with.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the ROP believes that fake news can be a destructive force that can harm our social compact. To address the proliferation of fake news, the government will need to work in partnership with civil society and ground-up initiatives to effectively reach out to all Singaporeans to educate them on the impact of fake news and the role they can play to push back against its spread. Through our proposal to develop a digital playbook, complemented by efforts by our network of peace ambassadors and advocates, we believe that we would be able to contribute towards the nation's fight against fake news. Only by working together and deepening our partnership would we be able to safeguard the peace and harmony that we all cherish in this country.