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Chairman Elijah E. Cummings
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Jim Jordan
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cummings and Ranking Member Jordan;

On behalf of the Consumer Technology Association, thank you for holding this important hearing on Facial Recognition Technology (Part II): Ensuring Transparency in Government Use. CTA represents over 2,000 American technology companies, 80% of which are small businesses. At CTA, we seek policies that encourage innovation and job and business creation.

The United States is the leader in innovation. Our entrepreneurs and companies create life-changing technologies like self-driving cars and artificial intelligence- tools that will lead to better, healthier, and safer lives. Facial recognition and biometrics are such tools that can be used in such a way.

Facial recognition can be a helpful tool that can speed lines in airports and similar locations, making lives easier for consumers. It's already used as a secure way of unlocking phones, adding an effective layer of protection for personal data. It also holds great promise in helping people with Alzheimer's and allowing insurance, medical and finance professionals to detect fraud.

We must weigh the risks and benefits of facial recognition technology, specifically as it relates to government and security. Like all tools and technologies, facial recognition could be used in a harmful manner. We shouldn't ban innovations simply because they can be abused. Instead, we should weigh the potential harm and the benefit in different use cases. If, in a specific instance, possible harm outweighs the benefits, we can create narrow restrictions that will mitigate the specific harm but still allow the benefit. Our efforts should prevent nefarious behavior, not outright ban the use of technology. We should not spread fear or act rashly, but rather focus on setting the right expectations and guardrails around the use of the technology.

As you discuss government use of facial recognition technology, we can take steps to ensure facial recognition will be used properly. Transparency is essential. Government agencies should have public guidelines on how they use the technology and strong security measures protecting the data. We need oversight and accountability in how law enforcement and the government

use it. Transparency in government use is important- consumers should be informed when the technology is being used by the government and for what purpose. More, government can provide close oversight to technology deployed by police or law enforcement agencies, and ensure it is being used effectively and accurately.

At the same time, we should be excited for the opportunities facial recognition can create. New technology is invented all the time, and, as we have seen in the past, can raise initial uncertainty. When cell phones with cameras first emerged, there was fear about the impact it could have on privacy and how they could be used against consumers. Years later, you'd be hard-pressed to find a phone that doesn't have a camera on it. The technology has become an integral part of our daily lives, and further, has led to entirely new economies being created around it.

There's no denying facial recognition technology is not yet perfect. Innovators are working to improve these systems and fix bias in the algorithms so the technology works for everyone. But we cannot afford to throw out or delay facial recognition technology – especially in the high-risk environment of our airports. Our air safety and national security are at stake.

As you continue these important conversations, CTA stands ready and willing to provide our assistance and insight. If we can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me. CTA appreciates your leadership and thoughtfulness on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Gary Shapiro
President and CEO