

BREACH OF TRUST: SURVEILLANCE IN PRIVATE SPACES

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CYBERSECURITY, INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY, AND GOVERNMENT INNOVATION
OF THE

OF THE

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BREACH OF TRUST: SURVEILLANCE IN PRIVATE SPACES

TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CYBERSECURITY, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY,
AND GOVERNMENT INNOVATION
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:20 p.m., in room 2247, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Nancy Mace [Chairwoman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Mace, Boebert, Crane, Brown, and Subramanyam.

Ms. MACE. Good afternoon. Now that we have one other Member here we have a quorum on the Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation. We will come to order, and welcome, everyone. The Ranking Member is on her way over.

Without objection, the Chair may declare a recess at any time, and I recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement, and I am going to go a little longer than usual, so I apologize.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRWOMAN NANCY MACE REPRESENTATIVE FROM SOUTH CAROLINA

Ms. MACE. Liberty begins with the right to close a door. A hidden camera kicks that door off its hinges.

The Constitution's Fourth Amendment enshrines a "reasonable expectation of privacy." Yet today, that freedom is violated by secret cameras and hidden devices to record women and girls with impunity.

Freedom is not a theory; it is the right to breathe, it is the right to dress and undress, to sleep without someone's camera filming your naked body. The Founders wrote liberty in parchment, but hidden cameras erase it in pixels.

I speak not just as a lawmaker, but as a survivor. Starting on November 5, 2023, I discovered my former fiancé, Patrick Bryant, had filmed women without their knowledge, without their permission, and without their consent.

He filmed rape too.

(1)

He appeared to catalogue his tapes and footage and images and photos in the way that he saved the files, and he stored these images, photos, and videos for years.

This is not just creepy. It is criminal, but only under weak state laws.

In South Carolina, first-time voyeurs face a misdemeanor and a small \$500 fine. That is not justice. That is betrayal.

Real men guard a woman's privacy, but predators harvest it.

When predators install covert cameras or forge explicit images, they do not just invade a room. They invade a life, and that life deserves more than a misdemeanor.

Exhibit one. Behind me is a screenshot from one of the videos I found of myself. The yellow circle, this naked silhouette, is my naked body. I did not know that I had been filmed. I did not give my consent. I did not give my permission. And this particular video that Patrick Bryant recorded of me on his secret camera, he saved for over three years, without my knowledge.

I did not pick this fight. I do not even want to be here today and discuss this. But because he is still roaming around South Carolina, free, filming whatever genital parts he wants, because no one has held him accountable—he is not in jail, he has not had to pay a fine, no restitution.

He is able to rape other women, film them. And when I discovered this video, I discovered that he utilized up to four potential devices, and I would not be surprised if there were more.

I was filmed in secret. The camera sat silent, yet it screamed my safety was negotiable and my dignity disposable.

This is an image of Patrick Bryant and the co-owner of that property, trying to lick his face. I think that says a lot about a man's character and what he was doing behind the scenes.

This next image I am going to show, and I am going to ask unanimous consent to enter it into the record.

It is the property where many women were filmed. This is the property where I found this hidden camera, and another device. At least one other device was used here to film women without their knowledge, without their permission, and without their consent. This was on the Isle of Palms, in South Carolina.

On this one particular camera that I was filmed on, and other women were filmed on, I found that there were at least 10,633 videos just on this one recording device. I am going to request unanimous consent to enter this into the record.

Now, I was given legal access to his device, by the way, on November 5, 2023, which is where I started to find all of these things.

This is a screenshot that illustrates that in the hours and days after I was granted legal access to his phone, he used an app called Samsung Smart Switch Mobile to transfer files—videos, photos, images—off of his device and onto another device.

On the same day that I was given legal access to his phone I found a second mobile device. It was a Tiramisu operating system. I have a screenshot of that. I forgot to print it off today. But I saw a second device hit our Wi-Fi, and then I see that there are files being transferred. It turns out, we believe, there were terabytes and terabytes of videos and photos and images transferred off of

this device and onto another. He would, weeks later, get a second mobile phone, as well.

All right. Patrick Bryant seemed to have certain fetishes of the women he catalogued, and in the evidence I uncovered there were some commonalities. So, he would categorize it. He would even have a headshot of a woman—he would have a headshot of a woman. I will show you an example. He would have a headshot of a woman, and then next to her headshot, just from her Facebook or Instagram or something—this is a woman in a glitzy dress—he would have a picture of a woman, and he would have all these files saved next to the headshot, almost as if he did not want to forget who that genital part belonged to.

So, on this one particular camera that I was filmed on, I am going to show you a series of photos of other women. I have blocked out the women's bodies to not identify them. This particular woman was changing. Her arms are spread out. But you can see her upper torso and the bottom of her torso from the front, as she was changing on this "camera." He saved that one for years.

This next image is similar to the one of me behind me. This is another woman I was unable to identify, and we are keeping her covered up. But she was fully nude in front of this camera. He saved this video of this woman, naked, walking around, for years.

One of the things that he would do in front of his hidden camera—this is him in the center of the shot—he would place women. One of the common things I saw on these videos, many, many videos, is he would put women in the middle of this area where this hidden camera was, and there would be sexual acts that would be performed. These women did not know they were being filmed.

I have spoken to at least two potential victims. One was definitely a victim because I saw the tapes. But I have spoken to at least two potential victims that saw this camera, and they asked him if they were being filmed, and Patrick Bryant said no.

So, he would place women in the center field of the camera, and sexual acts would be performed. He would also place women on a certain piece of furniture. On this couch back here he would place women, where I am pointing my finger. He would place them facing out so they would be toward the center of the camera, and that you would be able to see their bodies as they were engaged in sexual activity. And he would save these videos for years.

He had a fetish with photographing women who were naked at the end of his bed. I covered up the woman from the top. You can see her legs spread here as she is walking out after activity in his bedroom. She has no idea that she is being filmed. This one was with, I believe, his cellphone. And so, he had a fetish with buttocks and of women particularly at the end of his bed. I saw photo after photo of naked women at the end of his bed, who did not know they were being filmed or photographed.

Here is another example where another woman, her shoulder is here. I identified this victim. I was able to identify several victims. I do not know if she has been informed by law enforcement that she was also filmed and photographed naked. I do not know if she consented or not. But again, there was photo after photo of women naked at the end of his bed.

He had a habit of filming female employees or photographing them and also the wife and/or wives of male employees. This particular victim, it looks like she might be on a zipline. I also identified her. He had several images of her taken on an Olympus digital camera, and these are what I would describe as upskirt shots, and her genital area is exposed underneath. I was able to identify this victim based on a public post she had on Instagram, and so I have covered up what she is even wearing in this one. He kept these upskirt photos of this victim for almost ten years, and he had several upskirt photos from this family vacation at Callaway Gardens almost a decade ago, June 2015.

Here is another one when she is completely spread eagle, and he took, again—this is just another example from this same woman on the same trip—that he took of her vaginal area, her genital area, as she is on some sort of, I do not know, it looks like maybe a zipline or something. I am not sure. And he kept this image for almost a decade.

I was given permission to show this photo today from this victim. This is one of the rape victims that I discussed in my February 10 Floor speech. As you can tell, she is on the couch, and she is unconscious, passed out, blacked out. I think she was roofied. We do not know. We never will know. But as you can see, she is on the couch, dead.

I would find multiple photos of this rape victim on the couch of a man named Eric Bowman, who resides on Sullivan's Island, South Carolina. Her rape was premeditated. It was planned. It was filmed. And the tape of her being assaulted by the business partner of Patrick Bryant, John Osborne, this rape tape was saved for years. By the time I found the rape tape it had been saved for over five years.

This is sick. This is perverted. This is criminal. And these men walk free today in South Carolina. I cannot unsee the sexual assault and the rape of this young woman in the tape that I accidentally uncovered. These men should be behind bars.

These were not accidents. These were premeditated. They were planned. They were filmed. They were stored, meticulously organized. Categorized. Catalogued. Private hidden folder. For years. None of us knew. None of us had any knowledge that we were filmed or photographed. Some women did not know they had been raped. At least one did not know she had been raped. I was the one that told her.

I would learn after finding these images and speaking to potential victims over the last year and a half, Patrick Bryant allegedly raped at least three women.

See, there is a line between, historically, between criminals that are, if you are a Peeping Tom, then you graduate to voyeurism, then you graduate to rape, and then you graduate to violence. There have been studies about that kind of behavior.

At least two potential victims told me they once saw one of his cameras and he denied he was recording. It turns out he was.

We face an enemy that records and apologizes never.

When I spoke up, Patrick Bryant did not apologize. He retaliated. In fact, Patrick Bryant has started the process of suing—suing—his victims, myself included.

So, I am going to enter into the record a couple of documents.

The first document, I have redacted the names on this document. It is from the law firm Saxton & Stump, from one of Patrick Bryant's companies. And in this letter, three of his victims are named. He is suing, in the process of going to sue, one of his rape victims. He is in the process of suing another one.

This is a communication I got from his attorney that I am going to ask unanimous consent for both of these preservation letters to be entered into the record, that I received the other day

Because he is going to sue me for doing the right thing. So, I say, bring it on, brother, because there is no defamation in the truth. And if you are going to be the kind of moron and monster that sues his own victims, may God help you.

I am also going to ask unanimous consent to enter into the record the deed for the property where these women were filmed, and who the owner is.

I am also going to request unanimous consent to enter into the record two short-term rental documents. One is a short-term rental license application, dated back to 2017, and this predates, I believe, this camera. This is a known short-term rental where this camera was set up.

This is the resort rental management agreement for this property where all these women were filmed. This document, I believe, goes back to May 2018, as a short-term rental, a management company. I am going to ask unanimous consent to enter that into the record.

I am also going to ask unanimous consent to enter this preservation letter into the record. I sent this to Patrick Bryant in November 2023, saying that in state law in South Carolina, Section 16-17-470 you are not allowed to record women in this way. And this is a preservation letter for him to preserve everything.

Now mind you, I know he got a new phone. I know he got a second device. I would be shocked if he still has his Android S22, shocked if he still had it. But he got that letter early on.

So, let me be crystal clear. I will not be intimidated. I will not back down, not for myself, and absolutely not for any of the women he violated for years.

Predators like Patrick Bryant do not ask permission, and neither should justice. A hidden camera does not erase liberty and does not deserve a slap on the wrist.

Justice also does not crawl out of a plea deal. It arrives in a sentence that fits the crime and restores the victim.

Justice should come in the form of real sentences, real fines, and real protection for victims.

That is why I introduced the Sue VOYEURS Act, which creates a civil right of action for victims at the Federal level. The Stop VOYEURS Act, I also filed, expands the narrow Federal prohibition of video voyeurism. It is not against Federal law to film women in this way, except for in certain maritime jurisdictions and Tribal lands. As I mentioned earlier, South Carolina laws are a joke. They are very weak on this.

Secret recordings thrive in the shadows. These bills drag them into broad daylight.

Liberty is not theory. It is the right to undress in peace, to live unrecorded, without being filmed while naked.

Let us make sure the law reflects that truth. We need laws with teeth. We need survivors with standing. And we need to leave predators with nowhere left to hide.

So today, I choose daylight. I invite every Member of this House to step into that light with me, to pass these bills, and to prove that in the digital age liberty still lives where Americans stand, as our forefathers promised.

I encourage other potential victims to come forward. Potential victims may contact South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division lead investigator directly. Her name is Haley Nelson. Her email is hnelson@sled.sc.gov.

My office has a tipline that remains active, for those who believe they may have been recorded, assaulted, or otherwise victimized by Patrick Bryant and any of his business partners. That number is 843-212-7048.

I would run through a brick wall to protect women and girls in South Carolina, and to other potential victims, I want you to know, "I have your back."

And I yield back. I will now recognize the Ranking Member for her opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER

SHONTEL BROWN, REPRESENTATIVE FROM OHIO

Ms. BROWN. Thank you, Madam Chair. Before I begin I want to take a moment to acknowledge the strength of women who come forward to share their experiences with abuse and violations of privacy. Their stories remind us of the responsibility we all share to create a world where safety and dignity are never in question. No woman should ever feel unsafe, whether in public or private life. And I think that it is fair to say that we both agree that everyone has the right to be safe from prying eyes, electronic or real, in private places.

When someone checks into a hotel or a short-term rental, they have a reasonable expectation that they will not be watched or recorded. It shocks me that we even need to have this conversation, but this is the world we live in.

What is more, new technology has only made it easier for bad actors to abuse our trust. Cameras are smaller, cheaper, and harder to spot than ever. Although the largest companies in the industry have explicitly prohibited surveillance cameras inside of properties, too many bad actors have continuously been noncompliant.

A CNN report found that Airbnb may have received as many as 35,000 complaints about cameras inside of rentals on their platform. This is not just invasive, it is traumatizing.

Having hidden cameras in private spaces is not about security. It is not about making sure guests do not throw outrageous parties on the property. Outside cameras would accomplish that.

No. This is about invading someone's personal privacy. The lack of clear national standards allows platforms and hosts to operate under a patchwork of inconsistent rules, leaving consumers vulnerable.

Women are often the primary targets of harassment and surveillance. And the ways technology can be employed to harass and surveil women extend beyond hidden cameras in hotel rooms. For example, the National Organization for Women recently released a report finding that a quarter of American women have experienced abuse online, including sexual harassment, cyberstalking, and other threats.

Women of color reported experiencing the highest rates of online abuse. However, all communities are not impacted by surveillance in the same way. Black and Brown communities are disproportionately surveilled by law enforcement using surveillance cameras.

These systems frequently leverage facial recognition technology, which has shown significant error rates when analyzing individuals with Black and Brown skin tones. One study found that the error rate for facial recognition technology when used on light-skinned men was less than one in 100, while the error rate when used for darker-skinned women was nearly 35 percent.

This discrepancy raises serious questions about the possibility that surveillance technology will be used to unfairly target minority communities. Cameras that misidentify people do not create law and order; they only put more people at risk.

I appreciate the opportunity this hearing brings to discuss the ways that surveillance technology can be used to target women and other minority communities.

I ask my Republican colleagues to join me in thinking about the ways that this technology should be regulated to stop its misuse. As lawmakers, we cannot stand by while surveillance technology evolves unchecked.

With the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven monitoring tools, we must act decisively to close loopholes that allow consumer-facing platforms to profit at the expense of personal privacy.

Let me be clear. Every American has a fundamental right to privacy, especially in personal spaces like bedrooms, bathrooms, and living areas. Renting a home, whether for a weekend or a month, or walking down the street in your neighborhood should never require sacrificing that right.

Thank you, Chairwoman Mace, for raising these concerns about surveillance technology and women's safety and privacy. I look forward to today's conversation, and with that I yield back.

Ms. MACE. Thank you so much.

I am pleased to introduce our witnesses for today's hearing. Our first witness today is Mr. Joseph LaSorsa, Founder and President of LaSorsa and Associates. Our second witness is Ms. Laura Chadwick, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Travel Technology Association. And our third witness today is Mr. Alan Butler, Executive Director and President of the Electronic Privacy Information Center.

Welcome, everyone, and we are pleased to have you this afternoon.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 9(g), the witnesses, if you will please stand and raise your right hands.

Will you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

[Chorus of I dos.]

Ms. MACE. Let the record show that the witnesses all answered in the affirmative.

We appreciate all of you for being here today. You may be seated, and we look forward to your testimony.

I will remind the witnesses that we have read your written statements and they will appear in full in the hearing record. Please limit your oral statements to 5 minutes. As a reminder, please press the button on the microphone in front of you so that it is on and the Members up here can hear you. When you begin to speak the light in front of you will turn green. After 4 minutes the light will turn yellow. When the red light comes on your 5 minutes has expired and we would ask you to please wrap up.

I now recognize Mr. LaSorsa for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF JOSEPH LASORSA
FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT, LASORSA AND ASSOCIATES**

Mr. LASORSA. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Committee and discuss a growing concern in our increasingly connected society, covert surveillance in private and temporary spaces. My name is Joseph LaSorsa. I have spent the past 15 years in the field of personal protection, security consulting, technical surveillance countermeasures, and privacy protection, supporting both corporate and individual clients across the United States and abroad.

I am here to speak today about the ease in which covert surveillance can be conducted utilizing commercially available technology, and how this capability threatens the expectation of privacy in short-term and temporary rentals such as Airbnbs, VRBOs, and even hotel rooms.

Technical surveillance is nothing new, first instances of which have occurred as far back as the Civil War, when Abraham Lincoln's telegram lines were tapped. However, modern technology has become increasingly accessible, inexpensive, no longer in the domain of governments or corporate espionage. Small, high-definition cameras and audio recorders can be purchased online for less than \$100. These devices are mass-produced, often marketed as tools for legitimate purposes, such as for home security or child monitoring, but no verification of how or where they are utilized exists. This accessibility creates an environment where an individual, regardless of intent, can obtain and deploy highly effective covert surveillance equipment with minimal effort or technical skill.

As someone who routinely performs technical surveillance countermeasures inspections, or bug sweeps of offices, residences, and short-term rentals, I can confirm that these hidden cameras disguised as smoke detectors, alarm clocks, air purifiers, power adaptors, everyday commonly found devices are found in places where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

Before me here on the counter there are several devices such as carbon monoxide detectors, power adaptors, and even a computer mouse, which is used for technical surveillance.

Currently, U.S. laws regulating the manufacture, sale, and use of surveillance devices are outdated and insufficient. They presume lawful intent and typically do not restrict possession. In many

states, the legality of surveillance is tied to consent, but that consent is often ambiguous in the context of a short-term rental where the renter is unaware of being monitored in common spaces. This legal loophole creates a fundamental misalignment between the letter of the law and the reasonable expectation of privacy.

Homeowners would never be expected to tolerate surveillance within the privacy of their own homes. Similarly, individuals who temporarily rent a space, whether for a weekend stay or during travel, should be granted the same reasonable expectation of privacy. During such occupancy, that space effectively becomes their private residence. While some laws prohibit surveillance in inherently private areas such as bedrooms, bathrooms, and closets, the allowance of covert monitoring in so-called “common areas” like living rooms and kitchens, often without the renter’s knowledge or consent, undermines personal dignity, autonomy, and legal protections. This issue is not hypothetical. Multiple documented cases have revealed hidden surveillance devices in private rental properties.

To help restore and reinforce the public’s trust in the use of temporary spaces, the following is recommended:

Establish a Federal privacy expectation standard for short-term rentals, mirroring the protections afforded to long-term tenants and hotel guests.

Requiring full disclosure of any surveillance devices in any rented property, regardless of where they are placed and whether or not they are covert, and require signed and informed consent from renters.

Ban the use of surveillance devices in bedrooms and bathrooms of any rental or temporary living space, including common areas where sleeping or personal activities may occur.

Clarify penalties for covert surveillance of any individuals in temporary dwellings without clear and voluntary consent.

In conclusion, privacy is a foundational right, and its erosion in temporary living spaces threatens not only individual freedoms but also the integrity of platforms and industries which depend on public trust. Efforts must be made to close the legal and technological gap which has allowed covert surveillance to flourish unchecked in short-term rentals.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these insights. I look forward to answering your questions.

Ms. MACE. Thank you. I will now recognize Ms. Chadwick for her opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF LAURA CHADWICK
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
THE TRAVEL TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION**

Ms. CHADWICK. Thank you, Chairwoman Mace. I am so sorry that you had this experience in your life. The stories that you have shared of yours and of the other women are a nightmare. You are a survivor, and you are brave, and I thank you, as a woman, for bringing this to light.

Ms. MACE. Thank you. I did not come for this fight, I did not want it, but here we are. I am going to fight for women and girls

like hell. I am going to fight like hell for them all across the country. So, thank you for being here today.

Ms. CHADWICK. My name is Laura Chadwick, and I have served as President and CEO of the Travel Technology Association, known as Travel Tech, since October 2022.

Travel Tech is the voice of the travel technology industry, advocating for public policies that promote transparency, competition, and consumer choice. For over 25 years, Travel Tech has advocated for these values. Our members include online travel agents, metasearch engines, short-term rental platforms, travel management companies, and global distribution systems, as well as early stage travel tech startups.

Many of our consumer-facing members are marketplace platforms that connect travel service suppliers with would-be travelers online, facilitating information sharing and e-commerce. Suppliers such as hotels, airlines, and short-term rental owner/operators choose to provide their listings on our members' platforms.

Millions of consumers visit these sites to easily research travel options, compare, and book their travel. It is on our members' platforms where travel service providers directly compete, which in turn helps keep travel affordable for everyday Americans.

It is important to note that Travel Tech does not represent individual short-term rental owner/operators, travel agencies, or hotels. Travel Tech is the trade association for the leading travel platforms in the United States.

Travel Tech's advocacy on behalf of its members focuses on platform-related issues, such as mandatory and ancillary fee transparency and industry competition.

However, the purpose of my testimony today is to speak broadly about the policies that Travel Tech member companies facilitating short-term rental bookings have in place to help protect guests from surveillance in private spaces. I am not here to represent any one member but to speak for the industry at large.

I want to make it clear, as I said in my opening, that this is an issue that deeply resonates with me.

I want to make it clear that secret recordings of any unsuspecting person in any private space is wrong. Individuals who engage in such conduct violate fundamental human rights wherever secret recordings occur, be it in a hotel, locker room, retail establishment, medical setting, or even in an airplane restroom. As a woman and a mother, I am deeply concerned about this issue.

Our member companies are likewise focused on these issues. Having policies in place to help protect guests' safety and privacy is their highest priority.

One of the many benefits of a short-term rental lodging is that the properties come in various configurations, offering consumers a wide range of choice to meet their needs and budget. Common configurations include a full house or apartment, where all the space is considered private. Another popular configuration is a private room within a house or apartment with shared common space.

For all of these configurations and others, our members have unequivocal policies to help protect guests in these private spaces. Surveillance devices are prohibited, full stop. This means for entire house or apartment rentals, no surveillance devices are allowed

anywhere inside. In private rented rooms within a house or an apartment this means no surveillance devices too. Further, no cameras are allowed outside that record guests inside, and our members also have policies for outdoor-facing surveillance devices, like doorbell cameras, and they require that they be disclosed up front to guests.

Violations of these policies are infrequent, but when a guest does report an alleged hidden camera our members take it extremely seriously. They encourage guests to report actions by short-term rental owner/operators that violate the platforms' surveillance policies, and our members and guests report and address it accordingly. This can include removing the property from the platform. Our members provide resources to help guests report incidents to law enforcement and cooperate with police as they investigate.

Chairwoman Mace, we look forward to working with you with the Stop VOYEURS Act, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing, and I look forward to answering your questions to the best of my ability.

Ms. MACE. Thank you. I will now recognize Mr. Butler for his opening remarks.

**STATEMENT OF ALAN BUTLER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND PRESIDENT
ELECTRONIC PRIVACY INFORMATION CENTER**

Mr. BUTLER. Thank you, Chairwoman Mace and to the Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about this critical issue of privacy threats posed by recording and monitoring in shared spaces.

My name is Alan Butler, and I am the Executive Director at the Electronic Privacy Information Center. EPIC is an independent, nonprofit research organization established in 1994, to secure the right to privacy in the digital age for all people.

This hearing addresses a critical question that has been the central focus of modern privacy law since it was first developed more than a century ago: how can the law preserve our right to be let alone as technologies evolve and make surveillance easier and less expensive and harder to avoid?

The stakes are high, and those of us working to protect against abuse and provide meaningful guardrails on these powerful technologies should work together to establish safety standards and defend privacy.

Privacy law, as we know it today, was developed in response to the widespread adoption of camera technology and the turn of the 20th century. When Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis published "The Right to Privacy" in 1890, they were concerned that the onset of these new recording devices would mean that "what is whispered in the closet should be proclaimed from the house tops." Their response was to establish the theoretical foundation for the individual right to privacy against such intrusions, and this right has been enshrined in laws in cases over the ensuing decades.

The law has continued to evolve over the last century as technological developments have enabled new methods of surveillance and data collection, and policymakers have responded in kind, when necessary, by restricting the use of these technologies and enabling

public oversight. For example, Congress passed the Wiretap Act in 1968, to regulate both government and private sector uses of telephone interception systems.

We have witnessed a profound shift toward widespread surveillance in the 50 years since the Wiretap Act was passed. In 2002, EPIC launched a campaign called “Observing Surveillance” to document the widespread use of surveillance cameras in our Nation’s capital, and that trend has increased exponentially with the marketing of direct-to-consumer and direct-to-business camera products.

It would be hard to lead a similar campaign today because cameras are omnipresent, smaller and harder to detect than ever. And now even inexpensive cameras can capture detailed pictures at a distance. What is more, camera systems can now be integrated with facial recognition and other AI-based analytics and tracking capabilities.

Many of the devices in our homes, offices, and community spaces now have built-in sensors that pose significant threats to privacy. Recording devices have become much smaller and more precise than ever, and software makes it possible to analyze and even clone our voices for malicious purposes. And even when microphones are not present, we can still be exposed. Data about our precise location can reveal our movements, our social activities, our beliefs, and our health status. Location data is routinely generated by our cellphones and imbedded sensors around us.

The rapid expansion of cloud storage capacity has made storing thousands of hours of video, audio, and other sensor data trivial. So, where in the past a Closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance camera might have captured a relatively low-resolution image and stored it for a few days, now high-resolution images are stored for months or years. These developments have led to a significant loss of practical control over when and how images, recordings, and other information about our conversations and actions are being collected, and these capabilities have been used to malicious and abusive ends.

It is unfortunately not surprising that those who seek to control, manipulate, and abuse others are ready and willing to use these technologies against their victims.

It is important to raise awareness of these risks, but we should also demand that those who design these systems work to mitigate these harms. Thoughtful product design can help to prevent some of these harms, including by clearly indicating when a device is recording or by alerting a user that a tracking device is following them. But the law should also protect individuals against malicious users who can circumvent these protections.

Today’s laws do not adequately limit the collection, retention, and use of personal data collected by devices in public and shared spaces. The right to limit monitoring and tracking has been more limited in semi-public spaces than in private ones, and this is, in part, due to the interplay between privacy and speech rights, which limit our ability to penalize the dissemination of certain information.

But substantial progress has been made in the last decade to combat the scourge of image-based sexual abuse and other related

intimate privacy violations. Just this week, the TAKE IT DOWN Act was signed into law, criminalizing the non-consensual distribution of intimate images at the Federal level.

The defense and preservation of privacy has always relied upon the intertwined efforts of lawmakers, technologists, advocates, and individuals. As new threats emerge, we have to work to adapt our standards to preserve privacy protections, and we find ourselves now in a period where the rapid expansion of pervasive computing has embedded tracking capabilities in our lived environment. This is a time for action to ensure that we, as individuals, do not fall victim to the eradication of privacy by the path of least resistance.

We appreciate the opportunity to draw public attention to these issues and to assist the Subcommittee in this inquiry. EPIC has focused in recent years on the need for a strong data minimization standard to protect individuals against the risks of over-collection and unauthorized uses of their data.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to your questions.

Ms. MACE. Thank you. I will now recognize Ms. Boebert for 5 minutes.

Ms. BOEBERT. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you so much for your testimony and for holding this hearing today. I truly hope that the efforts that you are putting forward not only bring justice to victims and yourself but also protect women in the future, so thank you.

Ms. MACE. Thank you.

Ms. BOEBERT. Thank you to our witnesses who are here, as well. Mr. LaSorsa, would you agree that most Americans expect privacy when they rent a home or stay at an Airbnb or in a hotel?

Mr. LASORSA. Yes.

Ms. BOEBERT. And are cheap, consumer-grade surveillance tools now small and advanced enough to avoid detection without specialized equipment?

Mr. LASORSA. Not only small enough to avoid detection, but they also just hide in plain sight. So, like the devices you see here, people just do not think to look there.

Ms. BOEBERT. I would like for you to explain some of the devices that you brought with you today, if you do not mind.

Mr. LASORSA. Sure. So, cameras can be so small, if they are powered, that is. Batteries have to still be very large. But the cameras, if they are powered, can be very, very small, so they can be hidden in almost anything. Such as the picture up there, it looks like it is almost mounted high, like a smoke detector or something like that. That is very common, hidden in smoke detectors, exit signs, and other things. These devices here, this one is hidden in a carbon monoxide detector, several chargers, and a computer mouse. So, those devices, people do not think to look there, so even if they had tools or anything else, they typically would not look there, if that makes sense.

Ms. BOEBERT. And are common bug detectors effective in finding these devices?

Mr. LASORSA. For commercially grade equipment they are. However, it takes a little bit of skill to do it right. Almost everything nowadays has some type of transmission, some type of Bluetooth

connectivity, so there are a lot of false positives. So, if you do not know exactly what you are looking for, it is kind of a needle in a stack of needles nowadays, with smart homes.

Ms. BOEBERT. Understood. Thank you.

Ms. Chadwick, when your platform catches a host secretly recording guests, do you immediately ban that host and notify the guests who were spied on?

Ms. CHADWICK. When that occurs, when the guest reports it to our member platforms, our members provide immediate assistance to the guest. Individual investigations are determined on a case-by-case basis. As Mr. LaSorsa just said, there are potentials for false positives. So, as I said, those—

Ms. BOEBERT. Have there been true positives, and have those hosts been banned, or if there were to be one?

Ms. CHADWICK. I am not able to speak to individual company policies or procedures about particular incidences. But what I can tell you is that our Members take these reports very seriously, and immediately provide resources, to guests to contact law enforcement.

Ms. BOEBERT. I mean, I guess we are not going to get an answer if anyone has ever been banned. But let us say, hypothetically, to not expose those who are on your platform, hypothetically, if it was a true positive and law enforcement were involved, would you ban that host?

Ms. CHADWICK. I believe that is certainly an option.

Ms. BOEBERT. It is an option, yes, but would you ban them from your platform if that were—

Ms. CHADWICK. I mean, I cannot speak to how each individual company would do it.

Ms. BOEBERT. OK.

Ms. CHADWICK. But as I believe I said in my testimony, that does include banning from the platform.

Ms. BOEBERT. OK. Mr. Butler, are certain demographics, particularly women and girls, more likely to be targeted by covert surveillance in these environments?

Mr. BUTLER. I think that history certainly bears that out. I think that there is an inherent power dynamic in the use of some of these technologies, and you are definitely seeing certain populations targeted more than others, especially for intimate privacy violations and image-based sexual abuse.

Ms. BOEBERT. Thank you, Mr. Butler. And one last question, Mr. LaSorsa. Do you believe that our current laws are effective enough to protect people from being secretly recorded in semi-private even areas, and if not, what suggestions would you make to strengthen that law and further enforce them.

Mr. LASORSA. To directly answer, no. The largest issue that I see is that there is a legitimate use for covert surveillance cameras. So, say, for instance, we buy these to see how we can find them and everything else. One of the latest ones that I purchased was an exit sign, Wi-Fi camera. However, that was marketed as a security camera for an office, which is a legitimate use. So, that has become an issue that I see, is there is a legitimate use, so how do you define what somebody is actually going to do with it if they can legally purchase it?

Further, most of the devices that we have actually found, the individual takes the claim that they did not know it was illegal because they were able to purchase it due to that legitimate use. So, that is what I would highly recommend is trying to clarify the intent and use cases of surveillance devices, but I do not see an easy pathway there, considering the amount of legitimate use cases.

Ms. BOEBERT. Thank you very much. I yield.

Ms. MACE. I will now recognize Mr. Subramanyam for 5 minutes.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I am very sorry about your experience, and I hope you are able to find justice.

Ms. MACE. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. I would love to hear from Mr. LaSorsa about sort of what legislation already exists that has addressed this. You had some ideas in your testimony, so I would love to hear from you what you think we can do in Congress to help address this.

Mr. LASORSA. Sure. There are various laws which were written in the late 1960s, 1970s. The Title 18 USC, I believe it is Chapter 119, 2510, identifies what a covert device is. But again, it does not get into the intent behind it and the manufacture and sale of legitimate uses cases versus illegitimate.

So that being the case, as we are focused here on private spaces and temporary rentals, what I would recommend is establishing a Federal standard for privacy. So, most states—I cannot speak to all states, obviously, there are a lot of them—most states have an expectation of privacy as a basis for their laws. That is, let us say, the issue state to state. So, what is actually considered private? Is it, as Ms. Chadwick mentioned, the common spaces? That is different in a lot of states as far as if you can rent a room and the common spaces are shared between different people that can rent rooms, or is it the common space of a home, like a kitchen or a living room. Is that technically a common space?

So, that Federal standard, I think, should be worked toward—establishing a Federal standard for privacy.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. How does one define a private area? Because in a situation where someone is taking a victim to the living room, knowing that might be a private area and they can surveil there, how do you kind of address that?

Mr. LASORSA. In my testimony here, the simple way that I looked at it was if you were in your home and you expected to not be surveilled by somebody else, I think that is kind of the limit there. So, if you are in your home, you know, if you are standing near an open window, there is not an expectation of privacy. If you are in a space in your home where somebody, where they are legally allowed to be, cannot see you, and let us say there may be personal things that might occur there, I think that is where we should define the line.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. And then this is for anyone. How can someone protect themselves right now? You mentioned earlier there are devices, but it is very difficult to use them. Like what can people do right now to protect themselves and assure whether or not they are being surveilled?

Mr. LASORSA. If I may start, I start with just advising people of the lack of protections and that they may be exposed to this. So, just to put this in context, we do travel security risk assessments.

So, if I have a client traveling to, say, China, we do not tell them to look for the devices. We tell them to be aware that they are under surveillance.

So, the same practice almost exists if we are trying to inform people and protect people as they travel and rent Airbnbs, VRBOs, et cetera. We say just act like you are under surveillance, because you cannot expect privacy in a lot of these places.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Would anyone else like to comment on that? OK. I yield the remainder of my time. Thank you.

Ms. MACE. Thank you. I will now recognize Mr. Crane for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you, Ms. Chairwoman, for holding this very important hearing, and again, like everyone else, I apologize for what you went through, and I too hope you get justice.

Ms. MACE. Thank you.

Mr. CRANE. Mr. LaSorsa, you have spoken a lot about some of the privacy concerns with basic common technology that many Americans use in their homes, like Ring cameras, alarm clocks, smoke detectors, and how to detect breaches and abuses. In your experience conducting inspections and bug sweeps, what is something people would least expect that has become a huge privacy threat with some of those common technologies?

Mr. LASORSA. Mostly, I would say, the audio that goes with it. A lot of people seem to expect some type of video surveillance, like being seen through a window, for instance, but the audio part of that, as well. A lot of these devices are audio capable, and a lot of the people that even uses these devices are unaware of the excess legality of audio versus video.

So, for instance, where you are allowed to video does not necessarily mean that you are allowed to audio record, if I am saying that right. So, what you are saying being recorded I think is a large surprise to a lot of people, that what they said was recorded, if I am explaining that correctly.

Mr. CRANE. Are there any products that you can buy to actually put covers over those, so that you are not being video recorded? Some of the products you have in front of you, I believe you have a power strip, smoke detector, a mouse, a cellphone charger.

Mr. LASORSA. Right. Most of these, what we would recommend people to do is simply unplug them. I do not recommend that you damage or completely remove anybody's personal property from a rented property. However, these can simply be unplugged and covered. I am not sure if there are any tools to specifically cover them, but you can unplug it and put it in a closet or a drawer somewhere, something like that.

Mr. CRANE. There have been over 35,000 reports to Airbnb on surveillance devices at rentals as of 2024, and we have seen terrible cases of abuse, such as a man in Michigan was caught filming women in a tanning salon in 2021 and posting that footage to an adult website.

Earlier this year, a school security coordinator faced felony charges for installing a camera in a girl's locker room in Wisconsin. An exchange student in West Virginia was spied on in her personal bathroom with a disguised camera purchased from Amazon in

2023. Concerning some of these particularly egregious examples, how can people protect themselves against these privacy threats?

Mr. LASORSA. Mostly what we recommend is again being aware of the laws and how loose they are. So, to be aware of the fact that you are likely under video surveillance in such areas. And then to be aware of any devices, like you see here, and again, exit signs, smoke detectors, things like that, to be aware if they are different.

Mostly, if we see these devices installed somewhere, the overwhelming majority are in addition to what is already there. So, for instance, a smoke detector camera. There is a legitimate smoke detector in the room, and there is an additional smoke detector which is the actual camera. That is mostly what we see. So, that gets you the majority of the way there in terms of being aware and looking for extra devices that perhaps are in duplicate and different.

Mr. CRANE. We are talking a lot about Airbnbs today, but have you also encountered these at hotel chains and other places? Anybody?

Mr. LASORSA. Yes.

Mr. CRANE. Would you say one is more predominant than the other?

Mr. LASORSA. In my experience, the Airbnbs, VRBOs, those are, I would say, the majority of cases where we have looked, we have found something.

Mr. CRANE. Do corporations that operate large hotels, do they have their own security teams that will go through just to make sure employees are not installing some of this type of technology?

Mr. LASORSA. I am not aware if they have a dedicated team to that, but in my experience they are very concerned with it. Obviously, there is a large backlash if this does get out, so that is certainly a concern of theirs, yes.

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Butler, you spoke specifically about how recording devices have become smaller and more precise, and cloud storage capacity makes it shockingly easy to store thousands of hours of video and audio footage. How does the lack of clear consent requirement make it easier for perpetrators to violate privacy without legal consequences?

Mr. BUTLER. Thank you for the question, Representative. I think that it is a layered problem in the fact that you have, in many of these instances—not all—in some of these instances you have the perpetrator involved makes the consent question under current law more complicated, because a lot of the current law we have is focused on the privacy of communications between parties. In many states you have one-party consent, which means that if two people are talking that one person is not violating the law if they record that conversation. Now, in other states you have two-party consent, which does not allow surreptitious recording of conversations unless both people consent.

So, that is one element of the problem of disentangling consent in these cases, and I think another, as Mr. LaSorsa mentioned, is the lack of clarity, especially in common law and tort claims around defining those expectations, especially in spaces that are not specifically the home of the victim. And that is something that, I think, really statutory law has to step in to fix.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you. I yield back.

Ms. MACE. Thank you. And I will now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Mr. LaSorsa, can you show us some of those hidden camera devices that you brought with you today? Can you just show them?

Mr. LASORSA. Yes, ma'am. So, this is a Wi-Fi camera with audio, as well, as we spoke about with Mr. Crane. This has a microphone and camera in it. So, you can place this—

Ms. MACE. Do you have a mouse, too?

Mr. LASORSA. Yes, a computer mouse. That one is actually a cellphone inside of it. So, this is actually an audio recorder that you would simply call it.

Ms. MACE. And you have got a little black thing that you would plug into the wall.

Mr. LASORSA. You do, yes, and that way—

Ms. MACE. Is that a charger?

Mr. LASORSA [continuing]. It is currently powered. Oh, this one. This one is a typical cellphone charge but it has a Wi-Fi camera in it.

Ms. MACE. And the last one, the big white one.

Mr. LASORSA. It is a power strip with a camera and audio recorder in it.

Ms. MACE. Would you mind bringing me that up here, physically? The white one. The big one with the outlet plug. The outlet plug, yes. I want to take a look at it.

[Pause.]

Ms. MACE. This is very interesting. I am shaking a little bit. I recognize a device almost identical to this, that I believe Patrick Bryant, or the owner of this property, there was a device that was just like this. It was a big and bulky outlet plug, and I am just realizing it for the first time. It was plugged in over on the wall over here, in the center of the room, and the center of the room is where he often would record women with sexual activity in the middle of this camera. It was within feet. I am going to take a picture of this, if you do not mind. I am going to send it to our state Law Enforcement Division, because it looks really familiar. It is probably gone now. It is probably in the bottom of the ocean.

In your opinion, you all here today, if there are properties like this, and if someone is caught filming women naked, should they be kicked off of short-term rental sites? Mr. LaSorsa.

Mr. LASORSA. Absolutely.

Ms. MACE. Ms. Chadwick.

Ms. CHADWICK. Absolutely.

Ms. MACE. Mr. Butler.

Mr. BUTLER. Yes. Absolutely.

Ms. MACE. I have no idea if this property where all these women were filmed, if it is still on any of these short-term rental sites. If it is not, I hope by the end of the day today it is taken down. These men, these owners, who knew that there was a camera, knew women were being filmed. Could have unplugged it and did not. And these women were filmed for years at this property, and they did it with impunity.

OK. So, in terms of, you know, now that I have lived through this experience, I travel with a little device I got on Amazon. So, when I am at an Airbnb or VRBO or a hotel room, it has this little

antenna I can pull out and try to find devices. It feels pretty accurate.

Are there any particular products that you all recommend when people are traveling or where they are somewhere where there could be a hidden camera, that they should use to make sure that they sweep the room on their own, to make sure there are no devices recording them? Mr. LaSorsa.

Mr. LASORSA. We actually teach and recommend that, as well. There are several devices, what you are speaking to—

Ms. MACE. Is there any one that you particularly recommend that is really good?

Mr. LASORSA. Not particularly, no. They are all about the same, honestly.

Ms. MACE. OK. Ms. Chadwick.

Ms. CHADWICK. I am not familiar with such devices.

Ms. MACE. Mr. Butler.

Mr. BUTLER. Same. I do not have anything specific.

Ms. MACE. You can get them on Amazon, pretty cheap, and I have used them. They will find chips in places consistently.

Is it true that someone could hide a surveillance device today that is no bigger than a pen cap, and the average person would have no idea they are being watched? Mr. LaSorsa, I want to thank you for bringing those devices today. It is really shocking, and I am literally like physically shaking over this device. I recognize this. I recognize something almost identical to this, that was in that property. So, maybe there were up to five recording devices.

Platforms claim they ban unauthorized surveillance. How do we enforce this, Ms. Chadwick? How do we enforce surveillance in short-term rentals?

Ms. CHADWICK. Indeed. We have policies that ban them in any private space. Our members have policies that are, as I said, for every private space. And we also believe, as you, in your proposed legislation, that we should raise the consequences for such behavior, with the hopes of deterring any such behavior.

Ms. MACE. Can owners of properties where they have private cameras, like this one, can they get back onto these apps, these short-term rental sites once they have removed the camera? Is there an appeal process?

Ms. CHADWICK. I cannot speak about our members' particular policies and how they evaluate situations on a case-by-case basis.

Ms. MACE. Gotcha. OK. I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today. My 5 minutes is up. And in brief, Mr. Subramanyam, I want to say thank you for sticking around with us today.

When there are cameras recording people without their knowledge, without their permission, without their consent, particularly when they are fully unclothed, undressed, doing private things, it is not just about a little chip, a little camera, a little video, a little device. It is life changing. The women that I have talked to and identified who are victims of this man and men, they are never going to be the same, ever, and they still do not have justice. In the state of South Carolina our laws are \$500 for a misdemeanor for this.

I am an elected official. I was elected when I was filmed here. What the hell was he doing, or going to do? Was it for blackmail? Was it to intimidate me? Was it to hold it over my head, to do something? I have no idea what he was going to do with these. I do know he also had access to the Dark Web, based on one of the apps he had on his devices. I do not know if these videos were sold online on the Dark Web. I do not know if they were shown to friends. I do not know if they were sent around at cocktail parties with his business partners. I have no idea who has seen this.

But what I do know in this particular video and videos of other women, that one of me was saved for over three years. I had no F-ing idea. I have evidence today of upskirt shots of the wife of a male employee, and her genital area, that he took from beneath her. He saved those images for almost ten years. He categorized these videos, these photos, these images, based on who the woman was, her headshot, and then all of her body parts and genital area photos and videos he had, he then put them next to her headshots.

He had certain fetishes. He liked to photograph and video the buttocks. He loved the upskirt shots. He loved putting women in the middle of this hidden camera. I saw video after video after video, years old, before my time, before I ever knew this person, of women engaged in sexual activity with him in the center of this camera. And he would put them on the couch behind me in that image, in a certain position, so they would be more centered toward the camera, and you could see the woman's full naked body, in full view, as they were engaged in sexual activity. There is no way these women knew.

And, in fact, I have witnesses, and I have potential victims who saw the camera, this one above the refrigerator, and asked him if they were being filmed, and he said no. I also have potential rape victims, allegedly three, and I have a witness to some of these activities.

This man is a rapist; he is a voyeur. He is a Peeping Tom. He deserves to be in jail. He deserves everything that is coming to him, and I am going to ensure that his victims, every single victim in South Carolina, that they get their justice, and that we have legislation at the Federal and the state level that protects victims.

I did not get a victim's rights advocate for 11 months. One of the rape victims did not get her victim's rights advocate for six months.

Victims have rights. You cannot publish their name. You cannot intimidate them. The witness intimidation, the obstruction of justice that I have seen in this investigation is incredible, and I am documenting all of it. These women deserve better. It is more than a misdemeanor. It should be more than a year in jail. It should be more than a \$500 fine. These women's lives have been changed forever. There are some victims who are too afraid to come forward, and I am going to be their voice. For the women who have come forward, I want to say your bravery and your courage is immeasurable.

I am not doing this for me. I am doing this for the women behind me, for the women who will continue to be abused and be victims of a monster. This can never happen again, and I will not allow it on my watch. And I will work day in and day out, seven days a week, 365 days a year, to ensure these men can never harm an-

other woman again, with Federal legislation and state legislation, as well. Come hell or high water, these women will get what they deserve, and I will always have their back.

And with that I conclude this hearing today. And with that, and without objection, all Members will have five legislative days in which to submit materials and to submit additional written questions for the witnesses, which will be forwarded to the witnesses for their response.

If there is no further business, without objection the Subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:24 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

