

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Markup of 9 Bills, Full Committee

March 5, 2026

Everyone in this room shares the important goal of protecting our nation's kids as they navigate the online world. Over the past several months, I have engaged in aggressive bipartisan talks with Chairman Guthrie and his staff to address the risks children and teens face as they live increasingly digitally centered lives. I am disappointed that we were not able to come to bipartisan agreement on the bills before us today.

Unfortunately, Committee Republicans have chosen to move forward with a set of partisan bills that simply do not meet the mark for kids' safety and, if they become law, would leave kids and their parents worse off than they are today. That's right – these bills would leave our kids less safe online than they are today.

I believe that Republicans are handing Big Tech a giant gift by walking away from the stronger preemption standards that were previously included in these bills. The new preemption standards are inadequate to allow states to pass stronger laws to do more to protect kids. This is so important – especially as we consider how quickly technology can evolve with artificial intelligence. Even worse, the preemption provisions could harm existing efforts to protect kids by holding companies like Meta and Roblox accountable in the courts. Just last month, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg testified in a landmark trial about social media addiction and harm. We need to preserve these avenues to justice for kids and parents who have suffered unspeakable harms, including many of the parents in the room with us today. The Republicans' bills could prevent these avenues from even being open – leaving Meta and other Big Tech companies unaccountable for the harms they inflict on our kids.

Republicans have also included a giant loophole for Big Tech with their knowledge standard. This standard allows tech companies and companies that collect kids' data to continue to claim that they lacked actual knowledge or willfully disregarded knowledge that kids are using their platforms. Republicans are letting Big Tech off the hook by letting them say they don't know they have kids on their platforms. Nobody believes that, but Republicans want to let Big Tech get away with that ridiculous claim. With an impossible to meet knowledge standard, enforcement becomes extremely difficult.

These bills also threaten kids in unsupportive or even abusive households, where there can be real world harms from allowing parents complete access and control over their teens' online existence.

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These Republican bills let Big Tech off the hook, stop progress to protect kids, and make vulnerable kids less safe, and that is why I cannot support them today.

Finally, I am disappointed that the slate of bills we are considering today does not include my Don't Sell Kids Data Act, a straightforward bill that would have banned data brokers from profiting off of kids' data.

While I cannot support these bills today, I hope we can continue to work to improve all of the bills so that they actually protect kids. I am committed to this issue as I have always been, but we have got to get it right. Our kids depend on it.

We also will markup up five bipartisan energy cybersecurity bills on the agenda today. We are facing unprecedented challenges to the reliability of our power grid. The bills we are marking up help us address some of the cybersecurity concerns that we are currently facing. And while there is still more work to be done, I am encouraged to see bipartisan interest in moving these policies forward.

Three of the bills amend or reauthorize important programs that were established in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. We are also marking up legislation that ensures the Department of Energy has the authorities it needs to enhance energy security. The Department of Energy and Secretary Wright have a lot to prove to us when it comes to protecting our energy security. The Trump Administration has spent its efforts canceling much-needed investments in our power grid, even as our need for more reliable energy only grows.

This cannot continue. One of the programs we are reauthorizing today had millions in funding for rural electric cooperatives and municipal utilities held up for countless months due to senseless delays at Trump's Department of Energy. If we want the programs we are reauthorizing to succeed, we must ensure that this never happens again.

And with that, I yield back the balance of my time.