

**Allison Stanger**  
**April 30, 2024**

**Responses for the record to questions from The Honorable Russ Fulcher**

1. If I want to see this from a risk-based approach, what criteria and reporting requirements would that encompass, such as to the Federal Trade Commission? a. Could this lead to a "rating" system of sites that use certain algorithms, such as to protect children?
- b. Should there be a warning label, parental permission, etc.?

As my written testimony indicates, I would recommend striking Section 230 (c)1 and holding social media companies liable for harms caused by their algorithmic curation. In my opinion, a ratings system, no matter how meticulously constructed, would not suffice to prevent the harms discussed in our hearing. I would recommend requiring a license for opening a social media account. A social media license could be obtained at the time of receiving one's driver's license, or after one has registered to vote. Such a government requirement would make it clear to parents that they need to monitor their children's online activity, just as they do underage drinking, drug use, or driving without a license, since using social media without a license would be illegal. Teens will figure out workarounds, just as they do with the 21 year old federal drinking age, but the license requirement would function as a potent warning label, analogous to the age requirements for driving, smoking, drinking, and voting.

2. Social media companies moderate content that can be biased in certain directions, while not showing consistent policies. And yet, there is more misinformation or AI algorithms that trend users toward more outlandish content that could lead to violent behavior. Past government approaches have included a "Fairness Doctrine" approach that has the FCC determining contrasting views were adequately provided for in chat conversations, messaging streams, etc., along with limits against gratuitous violence. How can we encourage more competition of alternative views that seek to inform and not misinform without going down the road of something like a revamped Fairness Doctrine approach? I ask partly over concerns in giving the FCC too much authority or leeway, pre-empting the market to work through issues, given current rules in the face of previous court decisions and committee action.

We need a PBS public version of the Internet, one that can coexist alongside the commercial internet that emerges after repeal of Section 230 (c) 1. I am currently involved in several efforts to build a non-profit free internet (FreeNet) that encourages free and fair deliberation rather than vitriolic exchanges and censorship. The ultimate aim would be to link these public options so that a new FreeNet could emerge without the negative externalities of the current ad-driven business model. Put another way, we need one internet for commerce and another for democratic deliberation and social media, a private and a public sector option, if you will. I am happy to elaborate further on these concepts and the projects and people behind them if it is of interest. A central tenet of the FreeNet should be that humans have free speech rights, whereas algorithms and machines do not.