

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Gus Bilirakis  
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce**

**Legislative hearing on “Transforming the FTC: Legislation to Modernize Consumer Protection”**

**July 28, 2021**

*As prepared for delivery*

Good morning Chair Schakowsky, thank you for holding this important hearing, and to both panels appearing today. I’d like to welcome all five of our FTC Commissioners in front of our Subcommittee where we can not only examine the legislation before us, but also conduct overdue oversight of the Commission.

Chair Khan, congratulations on your recent confirmation as Commissioner, and Chair of the FTC. This is a very important agency, and I am eager to learn how you will continue leading on its important work – especially in the protection of our constituents from fraud and scams, and how you can enforce a national privacy standard we want to enact. It is critical we get the ball rolling on that effort.

I am also interested in learning how the FTC can assist with protecting Americans from ransomware and other cyber-attacks. I recently introduced H.R. 4551, the RANSOMWARE Act which would amend the SAFE Web Act to focus on such attacks. The FTC can play an important role in securing our nation from ransomware, so I hope today’s conversation may assist in fine tuning my legislation to best accomplish this goal.

Given the majority scheduled this as an oversight hearing as well, I would be remiss if I did not inquire about recent changes at the FTC. Chair Khan, I understand that change comes when a new team is in charge, and we all have our policy differences here in DC, but that should not stop you from working with your fellow Commissioners in a collegial manner. So you must understand why I am concerned when we hear reports of individuals inside the FTC being silenced and your other Commissioners being shut out of the process. We must take these allegations very seriously.

It’s concerning the recent changes in FTC processes took place without acknowledging the consideration of all Commissioners and of FTC experts, some of whom have lifetimes of

experience within the subject matter. To those staff, I hope you are watching today so you may know this Committee cares about the FTC process remaining open and transparent, and that your voice and expertise play an important role. We will begin a process to review these allegations, and with that I would like to announce for the FTC staff listening that if you have issues, we have created a whistleblower email [ECGOP.whistleblower@mail.house.gov](mailto:ECGOP.whistleblower@mail.house.gov).

As you aware with the other bills on the hearing, Republican members of this Committee introduced legislation to ensure guardrails are included in any FTC decision making process. I am glad to see these bills on the docket today. They will bring much needed transparency, require proper notice, and input from key experts at the FTC, like from the Bureau of Economics – something I wish was included in H.R. 2668, the legislation that expands Section 13(b).

As I have said before, Republicans support providing the FTC with the tools they need to pursue bad actors and to sufficiently enforce privacy standards, so I ask that the Democratic proposals in front of us be considered in that context. I hope my Democratic colleagues' engagement on these issues will also mean seriously engaging on putting in place a national privacy standard.

Madam Chair, thank you again for holding this hearing, we have a lot to get through today. I am eager to learn how we as the Committee of jurisdiction can bring much needed transparency to the FTC and how the legislation before us may do just that.

Thank you, and I yield back.