

**Opening Statement for Republican Leader Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce  
Legislative Hearing on “Holding Big Tech Accountable: Legislation to  
Protect Online Users”  
March 1, 2022**

**As Prepared for Delivery**

Thank you. I want to first say, Glory to Ukraine. I support their fight for freedom and continue to pray for their safety, security, and for freedom to prevail.

While some tech companies have taken steps to prevent the proliferation of Russian state sponsored propaganda, I hope this Subcommittee will be vigilant in addressing how others like Twitter maintaining an account for the Kremlin or TikTok reinstating Russian state-owned media are complicit in spreading it, as well as other disinformation campaigns from Putin.

This has real world consequences for Ukrainians and our other European allies. We all share the goal to hold Big Tech accountable especially for our children. Big Tech platforms are my biggest fear as a parent.

Nearly every conversation I have with parents and schools these days comes back to their concerns about Big Tech and our kids. This is echoed by pediatricians, school administrators, and teachers. [Big Tech are not advocates for children.](#) Our kids — the users — are the product and they’re being manipulated and exploited for profit.

They are exposed to cruelty, bullying, and induced to self-harm. These harms have been worsened by the move to a virtual life because of government imposed school closures and lockdowns. This committee can and must do more to address this crisis. If we are going to address issues with Big Tech and the advertising industry, that discussion should include improving transparency and accountability for how these businesses are collecting personal information especially from our children.

My Republican colleagues and I unveiled a privacy and data security framework last year. Addressing these issues in a hearing would help us

make progress. One bipartisan bill we asked to be considered is the [Walberg-Rush Child Online Privacy Protection Act update](#).

Despite the many changes being considered on the collection and use of data today, this is still missing from our hearings. Also, if we are discussing emerging technologies like artificial intelligence we should be addressing how AI can strengthen American leadership and reflect our values of freedom, human rights, and human dignity. These are issues that require time, education, and hearings to debate and identifying common ground.

A key component for many of these issues is the authority Congress grants to the Federal Trade Commission. The Democratic bills today would enact sweeping changes for the FTC. I appreciate the commission wants to be more involved in improving data security.

We have been clear that we are willing to negotiate on additional authority but changes like these should be given the appropriate time for discussion and vetting. We need to ensure accountability and transparency from the FTC on its current authorities before we give them more power. The FTC should come before this committee to help us better understand how they would use any additional authority as well as provide us assurances it has its own house in order.

For this reason, I sent a letter to Chair Khan yesterday on the FTC's recent enforcement announcements for the security vulnerabilities found in open-source software, specifically, Log4j. Recent testimony in the Senate suggests government systems may have used Log4j. So, we must learn whether agencies under our jurisdiction have system vulnerabilities that could be exploited, specifically, by foreign actors like Russia or China.

Notably missing from the witness panel today is TikTok, who declined our invitation to testify. This wasn't the first time. TikTok threatens the safety, mental health, and well-being of our kids. A recent Wall Street Journal investigation found teen girls are developing tics from content they watch on TikTok.

This is alarming, and their complete carelessness with people's personal information is even more concerning. TikTok's ties to China raise significant concerns regarding the amount of access the CCP has to the information of Americans. We know TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, is an

extension of this authoritarian regime, and now we see reports that TikTok is allowing Russian government propaganda to proliferate.

TikTok operates with disregard for U.S. national security concerns. Our witness today, Officer Duffey, can share more on how they challenge the reach of the local law enforcement as well. These concerns about privacy and Big Tech are issues E&C Republicans have been leading on since day one. I yield back.