Opening Statement of Chair Gus M. Bilirakis
As Prepared for Delivery
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Innovation, Data, and Commerce
Hearing entitled "Safeguarding Data and Innovation: Building the
Foundation for the Use of Artificial Intelligence"
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Good morning, everyone, and thank you to our witnesses for being here for this important hearing.

For years Congress, and especially this Committee, has been examining in one form or another artificial intelligence (AI), whether it was exploring how social media companies developed their algorithms, or looking at next generation vehicles and how they will transform safety and mobility. Central to these discussions has always been the need for America to lead in the development of standards and deployment, and what AI means for our data.

We kicked off our subcommittee hearings this year with a focus on our competitiveness with China, where we learned why it is critical for America to lead the world in key emerging technologies, and why it is imperative for Congress, as a first step, to enact a data privacy and security law.

AI has so many different applications, from auto filling text messages or excel spreadsheets all the way to generating unique images and speeches. But at the base of these applications is the need to collect and properly permission information to train and grow these AI models.

Without a data privacy and security standard that dictates the rules for how companies can collect, process, store, and transfer information, bad actors may have unfettered access to use and exploit our most sensitive information.

We have seen true innovators in this space using information they collect to help provide goods and services, or improve what they are offering to users.

For example, I have heard of internet service providers using information they collect from their customers to build AI processes to better understand when an outage may occur and how to prevent it. Additionally in the health care sector, AI can unlock greater speeds to processing information on diagnostic imaging and screenings or discovering new possibilities within the drug development pipeline.

That being said, there are entities that don't have our best interests in mind when they collect, sell, purchase, or disseminate our information. In several instances this is done under the radar without consumer ever knowing it happened.

We've seen how data collection practices have allowed data brokers to build profiles on Americans and sell them to any bidder or even give them to our foreign adversaries. Or how we've seen Chinese companies like TikTok collect everything they need to build out their

algorithms, which are blocked from leaving their own borders of China, but used to push harmful content to our children here in the U.S. Earlier this year we saw the horrible content TikTok has pushed to children like self-harm and suicide encouragement… and now war crimes and terrorist content are being touted on the platform.

This Committee examined issues like this last year when we passed comprehensive data privacy legislation out of Committee almost unanimously, which included requirements for companies to conduct impact assessments on how their algorithms could be harmful to children.

In fact, our legislation was touted as having the strongest online protections for children to date, and overall would provide stronger protections than any state law.

Unfortunately, the current reality is millions of Americans have no protections or controls when it comes to their sensitive information, and there are bad actors and companies who will abuse this gap in protections to their own benefit.

Americans deserve more transparency around what companies do with their information, more control over how their information can be used, and better data security practices from the entities that use it.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on the importance of enacting a data privacy law, and how that can set the United States up for success to lead the world in AI.

I thank you all for being here today and look forward to your testimony. I yield back.