

**Opening Statement of Chair Gus M. Bilirakis**  
**As Prepared for Delivery**  
**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Subcommittee on Innovation, Data, and Commerce**  
**Hearing titled “Legislative Solutions to Protect Kids Online and Ensure**  
**Americans’ Data Privacy Rights”**  
**April 17, 2024**

Good morning and welcome to today’s legislative hearing to examine solutions to protect kids online and safeguard Americans’ data privacy rights.

First, I want to welcome our new Subcommittee members, Representatives Obernolte and James. With business acumen and technical expertise, these esteemed members will bring new ideas to the Subcommittee. I’m looking forward to working with you both.

During the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, our Subcommittee held hearings to examine the need for a federal data privacy and security law.

Those hearings illustrated the need to provide certainty for Americans to know their rights online, and for businesses to know their obligations on a consistent basis throughout the country.

It will also help cement America’s global leadership and ensure we remain competitive in this evolving landscape.

This bipartisan work has culminated with this discuss draft, the American Privacy Rights Act, which is a comprehensive privacy and data security standard. This bipartisan, bicameral bill gives Americans the right to control their personal information, including how and where it is being used, collected, and stored.

This legislation establishes one national standard. It preempts the patchwork of state laws so when consumers and businesses cross state lines there are consistent rights, protections, and obligations.

The discussion draft creates requirements for companies contributing to the data ecosystem while protecting small businesses trying to provide for their customers.

The bill also directs strong data security standards that minimize and protect against data being used by bad actors, and provides Americans notice if their data is being transferred to a foreign adversary, like China, and allows consumers the choice to opt-out.

We are also discussing proposals that require age verification for certain websites and social media companies, streamline terms of service labeling, and allow third party software providers to make social networks safer.

There are also two bills that received attention in the Senate: Rep. Walberg’s Children and Teens’ Online Privacy Protection Act, or COPPA 2.0, and my Kids Online Safety Act, or KOSA.

I am proud to collaborate on these kids' privacy and online safety measures with our Subcommittee Vice-Chair Rep. Walberg, and I thank him for his longstanding leadership in the space. I'm also grateful to work with my fellow Floridian and colleague, Rep. Castor, on a bipartisan basis on these bills. I'm looking forward to continuing to work towards passage of these critical safety measures.

We know that Big Tech has failed to prioritize the health and safety of our children online, resulting in a significant increase in mental health conditions, suicide, and drug overdose deaths. It is time for Big Tech to be held accountable for facilitating this activity and manipulating our kids to keep them addicted to their screens for longer than ever before.

I am glad to have Ava Smithing from the Young People's Alliance here to share her personal story about the harms she experienced as a young woman related to social media. Ava, thank you for being here.

I'm also looking forward to hearing from Kara Frederick, who can share her experience as a team lead for Facebook. She understands how these companies operate and how to curtail the harms of their products.

In closing, I want to thank the witnesses for their testimony, and I want to thank Chair Rodgers for her historic bipartisan proposal. Let's get this done together for the sake of all Americans, and especially our kids.