

**Opening Statement of Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers
As Prepared for Delivery
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Innovation, Data, and Commerce
Markup of 3 Bills
May 23, 2024**

Good morning.

Our personal identity is at the very core of what makes us human.

It drives us to achieve the impossible and inspires us to pursue our goals and dreams. The ability to express our individual identity helps define who we are and deepen ties to our communities.

Encouraging individualism and identity is something that's uniquely American...

...something the founders envisioned and fought for—a society that's fiercely individual, where people are free to think, speak, and live their lives the way they want.

Many believed that the internet could empower the individual even more by creating new ways for people and businesses to connect, innovate, and share information.

Unfortunately, that has not been the case.

Instead, over time it has slowly eroded our identity, freedom to think for ourselves, and allowed Big Tech to capture more and more control over our lives.

This has been particularly damaging to people's privacy...

...their ability to secure what is their own...

..That could be personal information, people's habits, or their physical property...

should be in control of how that information is disclosed... and it should be voluntary, not coerced.

If the founders were here today, they would know, as we know, that this digital tyranny is not the American Dream.

The American Privacy Rights Act is an opportunity for a reset.

One that can help return us to the American Dream our Founders envisioned.

It gives people the right to control their personal information online...

...something the American people overwhelmingly want. They're tired of having their personal information abused for profit.

Right now, a person's location, for instance, can be shared without their knowledge or permission by apps on their phone.

This bill stops those apps from sharing or selling this data without permission.

If a person searches the internet about something personal or something they want kept private that information could be tracked with hidden pixels and shared without them knowing about it.

This bill keeps people's search history private.

If someone buys a pair of shoes online, they almost instantly are bombarded with ads across the platforms they use.

The American Privacy Rights Act gives the power back to the people by equipping them with the knowledge of how their data is being used to monetize, manipulate, and exploit them.

This legislation is also fundamental for protecting kids online.

The average American teenager spends 4.8 hours a day scrolling social media platforms.

This is a top fear of mine - and for nearly every parent we represent.

As our kids scroll, companies collect nearly every data point imaginable to build profiles on them and keep them addicted.

They intentionally target children with dangerous and life-threatening content.

At our hearing last month, we heard from a young woman, Ava, who shared how Big Tech weaponized her data and exploited her vulnerabilities.

Ava's story is just one of countless we've heard from kids, young adults, and families across the country.

APRA gets to the root cause of these problems by minimizing the collection and exploitation of our data.

It serves as a strong foundation from which to layer on other important policies to protect kids online, like the Kids Online Safety Act... which I'm excited we're also considering today

This latest draft also includes key provisions from the Children Online Privacy Protection Act.

I'd like to thank Reps. Walberg, Castor, and Senators Markey and Cassidy, for working with us.

We can achieve stronger protections for people while also continuing to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship.

18 states now have comprehensive data privacy laws...

...which means 18 different sets of rules that growing small businesses and startups are forced to navigate.

Ensuring compliance is costly.

Just last week, I had a company tell me they may be forced to pull out of certain states because they simply cannot comply with these conflicting standards.

Our bill would end this patchwork.

Today, we'll also be marking up H.R. 8449, the A.M. Radio for Every Vehicle Act, led by Reps. Bilirakis and Pallone.

Millions across the country rely on AM radio for critical information., especially during public emergencies...

It's vital we preserve this resource for Americans.

In the nearly 230-year history of this Committee, we have established a rich tradition of taking on the hard problems and delivering solutions for the people.

We have a moment to change the status quo and reset what our online ecosystem looks like.

The American Privacy Rights Act is a common sense, bipartisan, bicameral proposal.

I'm grateful for Senator Cantwell for working with me on this landmark legislation...

...as well as Ranking Member Pallone, who has been a trusted partner over the years as we have worked together on privacy...

...and has worked to improve this current draft.

As John Dingell said, there hasn't been a perfect law since Moses came down from the mountain.

I urge my colleagues to advance the legislation today and I look forward to continue working with all members and stakeholders to further perfect it before the full committee markup.

I yield back.