

## Chairman Guthrie Opening Remarks at CMT Hearing

### “The World Wild Web: Examining Online Harms”

Good morning and thank you, Chairman Bilirakis along with our witnesses who are joining us today. We’re here to discuss a pressing issue: protecting social media users, and especially kids, online.

Over the past few decades, we’ve seen digital technologies help bring about new and amazing innovations in our lives. But as a father of three children and grandfather of three – soon to be five – grandchildren, I also share the concerns of many other parents who recognize that there are unintended consequences that follow innovation, as bad actors misuse these same technologies to target the privacy, safety, and wellbeing of our most vulnerable.

I’m particularly concerned about one of these harms: the use of AI and other digital technologies to maliciously target women and children through exploiting deepfake, non-consensual intimate images.

The availability of powerful digital tools has made it easier than ever to generate realistic, but fake, depictions of our family, friends, and

neighbors. According to one estimate, almost 1.8 million Americans a year may be targeted with non-consensual intimate images.

That is why I'm committed to moving the bipartisan *TAKE IT DOWN Act*. Earlier this month, I joined a bipartisan group of House and Senate leaders, along with the First Lady, at a roundtable with survivors of malicious deepfake pornography and their parents. We heard heart wrenching stories of pain and suffering and discussed how the *TAKE IT DOWN Act* could help to prevent some of these harms in the future.

The *TAKE IT DOWN Act* adopts a common-sense approach to stop the spread of malicious deepfake pornography and grants survivors' new rights to request that non-consensual images of themselves be removed from the internet.

Law enforcement will also have new tools to tackle the growing crisis, especially deepfake child pornography. These are important, common-sense safeguards for this new technology.

More than 100 organizations – including those represented by three of the witnesses here today – as well as law enforcement, tech companies, and business groups support the *TAKE IT DOWN Act's* passage.

I'm sad to say this issue struck close to home when we heard about the heartbreaking death of one of my constituents recently, 16-year-old Elijah Heacock. He fell victim to an online extortion scheme, showing my community first-hand the growing danger of online predators targeting our kids. We are certainly praying for his family, and everyone here knows that these abhorrent crimes must be put to an end.

I'm glad to see states – including my home state of Kentucky – take important steps to address this crisis. But it is a *national* crisis as the internet knows no geographic bounds, and as such, a federal response is sorely needed.

That's why, in 2017, I introduced the *Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act* to ensure the center could continue to carry out its critical work on behalf of vulnerable children. We passed that bill and President Trump signed it.

Now, it is time for Congress to take action again. We must ensure parents have the tools they need to protect their children online. It is far too easy for predators, scammers, and other criminals to reach our kids. No parent should be left in the dark about what their child is exposed to online or feel overwhelmed when trying to make informed choices for their family. It's time to put families back in control and create a safer digital world for our children.

I look forward to learning from our witnesses today about what consumer protections exist, how to remedy additional gaps in the law, and how federal action can help to ensure protections are in place for Americans, and especially children, to guard against exploitation and other online harms.

I'm grateful to the witnesses joining us today and for their committed advocacy to protect consumers, especially children.

Thank you, and yield back my time.