

Chairman Brett Guthrie Opening Statement
December 2, 2025
Legislative Solutions to Protect Children and Teens Online
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade

Thank you, Chairman Bilirakis. Thank you to our witnesses for being here.

Tragedy strikes children online every day. In March, I shared the story of a constituent who took his life due to a sextortion scheme. I know each of us up here, and many others, have similar stories to share. While we passed the TAKE IT DOWN Act into law earlier this Congress to address sextortion, countless other harms persist, and it is our responsibility to find a solution.

That is why we are here today. We have almost two dozen bills before us that take a broad approach to create a comprehensive strategy to protect children online.

Imagine a 14-year-old child trying to download a social media app on their phone. There are many different layers needed to protect them from harm, and we are discussing a comprehensive approach today, where different types of legislation could work in harmony to address various concerns.

For example, age verification is needed first and foremost, including appropriate parental consent, even before logging in. Once a user's age is known, privacy protections under COPPA 2.0 would be triggered. We also have a range of bills to further address issues like parental monitoring of online activity, restrictions on the types of apps kids can access, how information is presented to kids in apps, and how children's data is used by online platforms.

And finally, the Kids Online Safety Act provides robust parental controls and limitations on harmful design features to ensure that platforms live up to these standards. Now, I would note that we went to great lengths to address concerns that Members of the House on both sides of aisle raised regarding KOSA in the last Congress, as well as concerns that the previous version would not pass a legal challenge, and thus not protect a single child. The KOSA we are considering today still holds platforms accountable, while also addressing these concerns.

Further, when it comes to AI chatbots we learned about in this committee a couple weeks ago, the SAFE BOTS Act and AWARE Act, will ensure users are appropriately informed that they're using AI and that there are educational resources for kids, parents, and educators on the safe use of AI chatbots.

These exemplify our strategy that Chairman Bilirakis highlighted. The online world is large and complex, and there is no silver bullet solution to protect kids. Each bill we are looking at today could be a piece of a puzzle, designed to work together to create the safest possible environment for children online.

They empower parents through parental consent mechanisms, standards for parental tools, and educational resources

They are curated to withstand constitutional challenges. A law that gets struck down protects no one – and if that happened, we’ve failed the very children we are trying to protect.

We have a unique opportunity to work together to craft a multi-faceted solution to protect children online. Thank you again to the witnesses for being here. I’m greatly looking forward to the discussion and I yield back.