

**Opening Statement of Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers
As Prepared for Delivery
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing entitled “TikTok: How Congress Can Safeguard American Data
Privacy And Protect Children From Online Harms”
March 23, 2023**

Mr. Chew, you are here because the American people need the truth about the threat TikTok poses to our national and personal security.

TikTok collects nearly every data point imaginable, from people’s location, to what they type and copy, who they talk to, biometric data, and more.

Even if they’ve never been on TikTok, your trackers are embedded in sites across the web.

TikTok surveils us all and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is able to use this as a tool to manipulate America as a whole.”

We do not trust TikTok will ever embrace American values—values for freedom, human rights, and innovation.

TikTok has repeatedly chosen the path for more control, more surveillance, and more manipulation.

Your platform should be banned.

I expect today you’ll say anything to avoid this outcome.

Like that you are 100 percent responsible for what TikTok does, that you suddenly endorse a national data privacy standard, that Project Texas is more than just a marketing scheme, that TikTok doesn’t harm our innocent children, or that your ties to the Chinese Communist Party through ByteDance is just a myth.

We aren’t buying it.

In fact, when you celebrate the 150 million American users on TikTok it emphasizes the urgency for Congress to act.

That is 150 million Americans that CCP can collect sensitive information on and control what we ultimately see, hear, and believe.”

TikTok has repeatedly been caught in the lie that it does not answer to the CCP through ByteDance.

Today, the CCP’s laws require Chinese companies like ByteDance to spy on their behalf.

That means any Chinese company must grant the CCP access and manipulation capabilities as a design feature.

Right now, ByteDance is under investigation by the DOJ for surveilling American journalists—both digital activity and physical movements through TikTok.

We also know that many of your employees still report directly to Beijing.

Internal recordings reveal there is a backdoor for China to access user data across the platform.

Your employees said quote, ‘everything is seen in China.’

A gateway to spy is not the only way TikTok and ByteDance can do the bidding of the CCP.

TikTok has helped erase events and people China wants the world to forget.

It has even censored an American teenager, who exposed the CCP’s genocide and torture of Uyghur Muslims.

The facts show that ByteDance is beholden to the CCP and ByteDance and TikTok are one in the same.”

TikTok also targets our children.

The ‘For You’ algorithm is a tool for TikTok to own their attention and prey on their innocence.

Within minutes of creating an account, your algorithm can promote suicide, self-harm, and eating disorders to children.

It encourages challenges for them to put their lives in danger and allows adults to prey on our beautiful, beloved daughters.

It’s also a portal for drug dealers to sell illicit fentanyl that China has banned, yet, is helping Mexican cartels produce, send across our border, and poison our children.

In China, the CCP proactively prohibits this type of TikTok content that promotes death and despair to kids.”

From the data it collects to the content it controls, TikTok is a grave threat of foreign influence in American life.

It's been said it is like allowing the Soviet Union the power to produce Saturday morning cartoons during the Cold War but much more powerful and much more dangerous.

Banning your platform will address the immediate threats.

Make no mistake, this Committee is also looking to the future too.

America needs to be prepared to stop the next technological tool or weapon China will use for its own strategic gain.

We must prevent any app, website, and platform like TikTok from ever spying on Americans again and we must provide the strongest protections possible for our children.

That is why this Committee is leading on a national privacy and data security standard.

It restricts sensitive American data from reaching our adversaries to begin with and what Big Tech and data brokers collect, process, store, and sell.

It makes it illegal for any platform to track and target children under 17.”

Mr. Chew, the Committee has requested that TikTok appear before us for a long time.

For those we serve, we are glad this day has finally come.

Today, the world is watching.

ByteDance is watching.

The Chinese Communist Party is watching.

But the answers you owe are to the American people, a free people who cherish their God-given unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all.

They deserve the truth.

Complete honesty and the law is the standard you are being held to before this Committee as we seek to get answers and a full understanding of what happens at TikTok under your watch.