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6 TIKTOK: HOW CONGRESS CAN SAFEGUARD AMERICAN DATA

7 PRIVACY AND PROTECT CHILDREN FROM ONLINE HARMS

8 THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 2023

9 House of Representatives,

10 Committee on Energy and Commerce,

11 Washington, D.C.

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15 The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:00 a.m. in

16 Room 2123, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Cathy McMorris

17 Rodgers [chair of the committee] presiding.

18

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19 Present: Representatives Rodgers, Burgess, Latta,
20 Guthrie, Griffith, Bilirakis, Johnson, Hudson, Walberg,
21 Carter, Duncan, Palmer, Dunn, Curtis, Lesko, Pence, Crenshaw,
22 Joyce, Armstrong, Weber, Allen, Balderson, Fulcher, Pfluger,
23 Harshbarger, Miller-Meeks, Cammack, Obernolte; Pallone,
24 Eshoo, DeGette, Schakowsky, Matsui, Castor, Sarbanes, Tonko,
25 Clarke, Cardenas, Ruiz, Peters, Dingell, Veasey, Kuster,
26 Barragan, Blunt Rochester, Soto, Craig, Schrier, Trahan, and
27 Fletcher.

28

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29 Staff Present: Kate Arey, Content Manager and Digital
30 Assistant; Sean Brebbia, Chief Counsel, Oversight &
31 Investigations; Jolie Brochin, Chief Counsel, Oversight &
32 Investigations; Deep Buddharaju, Senior Counsel, Oversight
33 and Investigations; Michael Cameron, Professional Staff
34 Member, Innovation, Data, and Commerce; Sydney Greene,
35 Director of Operations; Jack Heretik, Press Secretary;
36 Jessica Herron, Clerk, Innovation, Data, and Commerce; Nate
37 Hodson, Staff Director; Tara Hupman, Chief Counsel; Noah
38 Jackson, Clerk, C&T; Sean Kelly, Press Secretary; Peter
39 Kielty, General Counsel; Emily King, Member Services
40 Director; Chris Krepich, Press Secretary; Tim Kurth, Chief
41 Counsel, Innovations, Data, and Commerce; Giulia Leganski,
42 Professional Staff Member, C&T; Kate O'Connor, Chief Counsel,
43 C&T; Kaitlyn Peterson, Clerk, Energy & Environment; Brannon
44 Rains, Professional Staff Member, Innovation, Data, and
45 Commerce; Olivia Shields, Communications Director; Lacey
46 Strahm, Fellow, Innovation, Data, and Commerce; Michael
47 Taggart, Policy Director; Teddy Tanzer, Senior Counsel,
48 Innovation, Data, and Commerce; Dray Throne, Director of
49 Information Technology; Hannah Anton, Minority Staff

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50 Assistant; Ian Barlow, Minority FTC Detailee; Jennifer
51 Epperson, Minority Chief Counsel, Communications and
52 Technology; Austin Flack, Minority Junior Professional Staff
53 Member; Waverly Gordon, Minority Deputy Staff Director and
54 General Counsel; Daniel Greene, Minority Professional Staff
55 Member; Tiffany Guarascio, Minority Staff Director; Perry
56 Hamilton, Minority Member Services and Outreach Manager; Lisa
57 Hone, Minority Chief Counsel, Innovation, Data, and Commerce;
58 Liz Johns, Minority GAO Detailee; Mackenzie Kuhl, Minority
59 Digital Manager; Una Lee, Minority Chief Health Counsel; Will
60 McAuliffe, Minority Chief Counsel, Oversight and
61 Investigations; Dan Miller, Minority Professional Staff
62 Member; Joe Orlando, Minority Senior Policy Analyst;
63 Christina Parisi, Minority Professional Staff Member;
64 Caroline Rinker, Minority Press Assistant; Harry Samuels,
65 Minority Oversight Counsel; Michael Scurato, Minority FCC
66 Detailee; Andrew Souvall, Minority Director of
67 Communications, Outreach, and Member Services; Johanna
68 Thomas, Minority Counsel; Caroline Wood, Minority Research
69 Analyst; and C.J. Young, Minority Deputy Communications
70 Director.

71

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72 *The Chair. The committee will come to order. Before I
73 begin I would like to take a moment to address the guests in
74 the audience.

75 First of all, thank you for coming. We think engaged
76 citizens are welcome, and a valuable part of the political
77 process. I do want to remind the guests in the audience that
78 the chair is obliged under the House rules and the rules of
79 the committee to maintain order and preserve decorum in the
80 committee room. I know that we have deep feelings on these
81 issues, and that we all may not agree on everything, but I
82 ask that we abide by these rules, and be respectful of our
83 audience members, our viewers, and our witnesses. The Chair
84 appreciates the audience cooperation in maintaining order, as
85 we have a full discussion on these important issues.

86 The chair recognizes herself for five minutes for an
87 opening statement.

88 Mr. Chew, you are here because the American people need
89 the truth about the threat TikTok poses to our national and
90 personal security. TikTok collects nearly every data point
91 imaginable, from people's location to what they type and
92 copy, who they talk to, biometric data, and more. Even if

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93 they have never been on TikTok, your trackers are embedded in
94 sites across the Web. TikTok surveils us all, and the
95 Chinese Communist Party is able to use this as a tool to
96 manipulate America as a whole.

97 We do not trust TikTok will ever embrace American
98 values, values for freedom, human rights, and innovation.
99 TikTok has repeatedly chosen the path for more control, more
100 surveillance, and more manipulation. Your platform should be
101 banned.

102 I expect today you will say anything to avoid this
103 outcome, like you are 100 percent responsible for what TikTok
104 does, that you suddenly endorse a national data privacy
105 standard, that Project Texas is more than a marketing scheme,
106 that TikTok doesn't harm our innocent children, or that your
107 ties to the Chinese Communist Party through ByteDance is just
108 a myth. We aren't buying it.

109 In fact, when you celebrate the 150 million American
110 users on TikTok, it emphasizes the urgency for Congress to
111 act. That is 150 million Americans that CCP can collect
112 sensitive information on, and control what we ultimately see,
113 hear, and believe.

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114 TikTok has repeatedly been caught in the lie that it
115 does not answer to the CCP through ByteDance. Today the
116 CCP's laws require Chinese companies like ByteDance to spy on
117 their behalf. That means any Chinese company must grant the
118 CCP access and manipulation capabilities as a design feature.
119 Right now ByteDance is under investigation by the DoJ for
120 surveilling American journalists, both digital activity and
121 physical movements, through TikTok.

122 We also know that many of your employees still report
123 directly to Beijing. Internal recordings reveal there is a
124 back door for China to access user data across the platform.
125 Your employees said, "Everything is seen in China."`

126 A gateway to spy is not the only way TikTok and
127 ByteDance can do the bidding of the CCP. TikTok has helped
128 erase events and people China wants the world to forget. It
129 has even censored an American teenager who exposed CCP's
130 genocide and torture of Uyghur Muslims. The facts show that
131 ByteDance is beholden to the CCP, and ByteDance and TikTok
132 are one and the same.

133 TikTok also targets our children. The For You algorithm
134 is a tool for TikTok to own their attention and prey on their

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135 innocence. Within minutes of creating an account, your
136 algorithm can promote suicide, self-harm, and eating
137 disorders to children. It encourages challenges for them to
138 put their lives in danger, and allows adults to prey on our
139 beautiful, beloved daughters.

140 It is also a portal for drug dealers to sell illicit
141 fentanyl that China has banned, yet is helping Mexican
142 cartels produce, send across our border, and poison our
143 children. In China the CCP proactively prohibits this type
144 of TikTok content that promotes death and despair to kids.

145 From the data it collects to the content it controls,
146 TikTok is a grave threat of foreign influence in American
147 life. It has been said it is like allowing the Soviet Union
148 the power to produce Saturday morning cartoons during the
149 Cold War, but much more powerful and much more dangerous.

150 Banning your platform will address the immediate
151 threats. Make no mistake, this committee is also looking to
152 the future. America needs to be prepared to stop the next
153 technological tool or weapon China will use for its own
154 strategic gain. We must prevent any app, website, and
155 platform like TikTok from ever spying on Americans again, and

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156 we must provide the strongest protections possible for our
157 children.

158 That is why this committee is leading on a national
159 privacy and data security standard. It restricts sensitive
160 American data from reaching our adversaries to begin with,
161 and what Big Tech and data brokers collect, process, store,
162 and sell. It makes it illegal for any platform to track and
163 target children under 17.

164 Mr. Chew, the committee has requested that TikTok appear
165 before us for a long time. For those we serve, we are glad
166 the day has finally come. Today the world is watching.
167 ByteDance is watching. The Chinese Communist Party is
168 watching. But the answers you owe are to the American
169 people, a free people who cherish their God-given unalienable
170 rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for
171 all. They deserve the truth.

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

176 [The prepared statement of The Chair follows:]

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177

178 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

179

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180 *The Chair. The chair now recognizes the ranking
181 member, Mr. Pallone, for five minutes.

182 *Mr. Pallone. Thank you, Madam Chair, and let me say
183 that I agree with much of what you just said, and I certainly
184 appreciate your enthusiasm and your commenting on being a
185 mother and concerned about children. And I am glad that we
186 are having this hearing today.

187 Big Tech has transformed the information superhighway
188 into a super spreader of harmful content, invasive
189 surveillance practices, and addictive and damaging design
190 features. Data is Big Tech's most valuable commodity, and by
191 collecting far more user data than they need, Big Tech
192 platforms can use, share, and sell information to generate
193 billions of dollars in revenue.

194 Today the American people are powerless to stop this
195 invasion of their privacy, and we can't wait any longer to
196 pass comprehensive national privacy legislation that puts
197 people back in control of their data. We must hold Big Tech
198 accountable for its actions, and transparency is critical to
199 that accountability.

200 In the past several Congresses, this committee has heard

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201 from senior executives of other social media platforms about
202 troubling and repeated instances where they put profits over
203 people. Now, today, we intend to bring more transparency to
204 TikTok, which is controlled by its Beijing, communist-based
205 parent company, ByteDance. And while TikTok videos provide a
206 new, fun way for people to express their creativity and enjoy
207 the videos of others, the platform also threatens the health,
208 privacy, and security of the American people. And I am not
209 convinced that the benefits outweigh the risks that it poses
210 to Americans in its present form.

211 More than 130 million people in the United States use
212 TikTok every month, including two-thirds of American
213 teenagers. TikTok collects and compiles vast troves of
214 valuable personal information to create an addictive
215 algorithm that is able to predict with uncanny accuracy which
216 videos will keep users scrolling, even if the content is
217 harmful, inaccurate, or feeds destructive behavior or
218 extremist beliefs.

219 Now, the combination of TikTok's Beijing, communist-
220 based China ownership and its popularity exacerbates its
221 danger to our country and to our privacy. The Chinese

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222 communist government can compel companies based in Beijing
223 like TikTok to share data with the communist government
224 through existing Beijing law or coercion.

225 National security experts are sounding the alarm,
226 warning that the Chinese communist government could require
227 TikTok to compromise device security, maliciously access
228 American user data, promote pro-Communist propaganda, and
229 undermine American interests. Disinformation campaigns could
230 be launched by the Chinese communist government through
231 TikTok, which has already become rife with misinformation and
232 disinformation, illegal activities, and hate speech. A
233 recent report found that 20 percent of TikTok search results
234 on prominent news topics contain misinformation.

235 Social media's profitability depends on growth and
236 engagement. More eyes on their content for longer time leads
237 to more advertising dollars and revenue generation.
238 Addictive algorithms are fine-tuned to optimize growth and
239 engagement without necessarily taking into account potential
240 harms to users.

241 Children and teens are particularly vulnerable.
242 Frequent online use of interactive media on digital devices

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243 is associated with increased levels of depression among
244 middle and high school students. Research has found that
245 TikTok's addictive algorithms recommend videos to teens that
246 create and exacerbate feelings of emotional distress,
247 including videos promoting suicide, self-harm, and eating
248 disorders.

249 Public outrage and hollow apologies alone are not going
250 to rein in Big Tech. Congress has to enact laws protecting
251 the American public from such online harms, and we simply
252 cannot wait any longer to pass the comprehensive privacy
253 legislation that I authored with then ranking member, now
254 Chair Rodgers, last Congress that overwhelmingly advanced out
255 of the committee. It ensures that companies, wherever they
256 live -- it ensures, I should say, that consumers, wherever
257 they live in this country, will have meaningful control over
258 their personal information.

259 Our legislation establishes baseline data minimization
260 requirements, ensuring that companies only collect, process,
261 and transfer data necessary to provide a service. And it
262 provides heightened privacy protections for children and
263 teenagers. So I think it is time to make this legislation

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264 the law of the land.

265 And we also have to examine the reforms needed to
266 section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. The liability
267 shield for social media platforms has for too long been
268 abused, and led to a lack of accountability for social media
269 platforms. So I hope we can find a bipartisan path forward
270 on that issue, too -- and I think you are having a hearing
271 next week on it -- so we can stop the very real harms to our
272 country and democracy under the current law.

273 I look forward to the discussion today as we continue to
274 bring accountability to Big Tech.

275 And let me say to Mr. Chew I know this is about TikTok,
276 but I am focusing all my attention not only on TikTok, but on
277 these concerns, wide concerns about social media and the
278 protection of privacy.

279

280 [The prepared statement of Mr. Pallone follows:]

281

282 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

283

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284 *Mr. Pallone. And with that, I yield back. Thank you
285 again, Madam Chair, for having this very important hearing.

286 *The Chair. Our witness today is Mr. Shou Chew, chief
287 executive officer of TikTok.

288 You are recognized for five minutes.

289

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290 STATEMENT OF SHOU CHEW, CEO, TIKTOK, INC.

291

292 *Mr. Chew. Thank you. Chair Rodgers, Ranking Member
293 Pallone, members of the committee, thank you for your time.

294 I am Shou Chew, and I am from Singapore. That is where
295 I was born, as were my parents. And after serving in
296 Singapore's military, I moved to the UK to attend college,
297 and then here to the U.S. to attend business school. I
298 actually met my wife here. By the way, she was just born a
299 few miles away from here in Virginia.

300 Two years ago I became the CEO of TikTok. Today we have
301 more than a billion monthly active users around the world,
302 including over 150 million in the United States. Our app is
303 a place where people can be creative and curious, and where
304 close to five million American businesses, mostly small
305 businesses, go to find new customers and to fuel their
306 growth.

307 Now, as TikTok has grown, we have tried to learn the
308 lessons of companies that have come before us, especially
309 when it comes to the safety of teenagers. While the vast
310 majority of people on TikTok are over 18, one of -- and one

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311 of our fastest-growing demographics are people over 35, we
312 have spent a lot of time adopting measures to protect
313 teenagers. Many of those measures are firsts for the social
314 media industry.

315 We forbid direct messaging for people under 16, and we
316 have a 16-minute watch time by default for those under 18.
317 We have a suite of family pairing tools so that parents can
318 participate in their teens' experience, and make the choices
319 that are right for their family.

320 We want TikTok to be a place where teenagers can come to
321 learn, which is why we recently launched a feed that
322 exclusively features educational videos about STEM. STEM
323 videos already have over 116 billion views on TikTok, and I
324 think TikTok is inspiring a new generation to discover a
325 passion for math and science.

326 I would also like to talk about national security
327 concerns that you have raised that we take very, very
328 seriously. Let me start by addressing a few misconceptions
329 about ByteDance of which we are a subsidiary. ByteDance is
330 not owned or controlled by the Chinese Government. It is a
331 private company. Sixty percent of the company is owned by

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332 global institutional investors, twenty percent is owned by
333 the founder, and twenty percent owned by employees around the
334 world. ByteDance has five board members; three of them are
335 American.

336 Now, TikTok itself is not available in mainland China.
337 We are headquartered in Los Angeles and in Singapore, and we
338 have 7,000 employees in the U.S. today. Still, we have heard
339 important concerns about the potential for unwanted foreign
340 access to U.S. data and potential manipulation of the TikTok
341 U.S. ecosystem. Our approach has never been to dismiss or
342 trivialize any of these concerns. We have addressed them
343 with real action. Now, that is what we have been doing for
344 the last two years: building what amounts to a firewall that
345 seals off protected U.S. user data from unauthorized foreign
346 access.

347 The bottom line is this: American data stored on
348 American soil by an American company overseen by American
349 personnel. We call this initiative Project Texas. That is
350 where Oracle is headquartered. Today U.S. TikTok data is
351 stored, by default, in Oracle's servers. Only vetted
352 personnel operating in a new company called TikTok U.S. Data

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353 Security can control access to this data.

354 Now, additionally, we have plans for this company to
355 report to an independent American board with strong security
356 credentials.

357 Now there is still some work to do. We have legacy U.S.
358 data sitting in our servers in Virginia and in Singapore. We
359 are deleting those, and we expect that to be complete this
360 year. When that is done, all protected U.S. data will be
361 under the protection of U.S. law, and under the control of
362 the U.S.-led security team. This eliminates the concern that
363 some of you have shared with me that TikTok user data can be
364 subject to Chinese law.

365 This goes further, by the way, than what any other
366 company in our industry has done.

367 We will also provide unprecedented transparency and
368 security for the source code for the TikTok app and
369 recommendation engine. Third-party validators like Oracle
370 and others will review and validate our source code and
371 algorithms. This will help ensure the integrity of the code
372 that powers what Americans see on our app.

373 We will further provide access to researchers, which

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374 helps them study and monitor our content ecosystem. Now, we
375 believe we are the only -- the only -- company that offers
376 this level of transparency.

377 Now, trust is about actions we take. We have to earn
378 that trust with decisions we make for our company and our
379 products. The potential security, privacy, content
380 manipulation concerns raised about TikTok are really not
381 unique to us. The same issues apply to other companies. We
382 believe what is needed are clear, transparent rules that
383 apply broadly to all tech companies. Ownership is not at the
384 core of addressing these concerns.

385 Now, as I conclude, there are more than 150 million
386 Americans who love our platform, and we know we have a
387 responsibility to protect them, which is why I am making the
388 following commitments to you and to all our users.

389 Number one, we will keep safety, particularly for
390 teenagers, as a top priority for us.

391 Number two, we will firewall-protect U.S. data from
392 unwanted foreign access.

393 Number three, TikTok will remain a place for free
394 expression, and will not be manipulated by any government.

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395 And fourth, we will be transparent, and we will give
396 access to third-party independent monitors to remain
397 accountable for our commitments.

398 I will be grateful for any feedback that you have, and I
399 look forward to your questions. Thank you very much.

400 [The prepared statement of Mr. Chew follows:]

401

402 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

403

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404 *The Chair. As you know, the testimony that you are
405 about to give is subject to title 18, section 1001 of the
406 United States Code.

407 As you state in your testimony, ByteDance is TikTok's
408 parent company. Is it accurate to say that you are in
409 regular communication with the CEO of ByteDance, Liang Rubo?

410 *Mr. Chew. Chair Rodgers, yes, I am in --

411 *The Chair. Thank you.

412 *Mr. Chew. -- communication with him.

413 *The Chair. Okay. Kelly Zhang is the CEO of ByteDance
414 China, overseeing Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok. Are
415 you in regular communication with Kelly?

416 *Mr. Chew. I am not in regular communication with her.

417 *The Chair. The ByteDance editor in chief is Zhang
418 Fuping, correct?

419 *Mr. Chew. I believe so.

420 *The Chair. And Wu Shugang is a Beijing ByteDance
421 Technology board member, and also an official of the
422 Cyberspace Administration in China. Is this correct?

423 *Mr. Chew. I believe so. I -- they are not in the
424 right --

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425 *The Chair. Thank you. All of these individuals work
426 or are affiliated with the Chinese Communist Party, are at
427 the highest levels of leadership at ByteDance, a company
428 where you previously served as the chief financial officer,
429 and where you regularly communicate with their CEO.

430 TikTok has told us that you weren't sharing data with
431 the CCP. But leaked audio from within TikTok has proven
432 otherwise. TikTok told us that you weren't tracking the
433 geolocation of American citizens. You were. TikTok told us
434 you weren't spying on journalists. You were.

435 In your testimony you state that ByteDance is not
436 beholden to the CCP. Again, each of the individuals I listed
437 are affiliated with the Chinese Communist Party, including
438 Zhang Fuping, who is reported to be the Communist Party
439 Secretary of ByteDance, and who has called for the party
440 committee to "take the lead" across all party lines to
441 ensure that algorithm is enforced by "correct political
442 direction."

443 Just this morning the Wall Street Journal reported that
444 the CCP is opposed to a forced sale of TikTok by ByteDance,
445 quoting a CCP spokesman as saying the Chinese Government

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446 would make a decision regarding any sale of TikTok. So the
447 CCP believes they have the final say over your company. I
448 have zero confidence in your assertion that ByteDance and
449 TikTok are not beholden to the CCP.

450 Next question. Heating content is a way of promoting
451 and moderating content. In your current or previous
452 positions within Chinese companies, have employees engaged in
453 heating content for users outside of China? Very quickly,
454 yes or no?

455 *Mr. Chew. Our heating process is approved by our local
456 teams --

457 *The Chair. So --

458 *Mr. Chew. -- in the various countries.

459 *The Chair. -- the answer is yes. Thank you.

460 Have any moderation tools been used to remove content on
461 TikTok associated with the Uyghur genocide, yes or no?

462 *Mr. Chew. We do not remove that kind of content.
463 TikTok is a place for freedom of expression and, Chair
464 Rodgers, like I said, if you use our app you can go on it and
465 you will see a lot of users around the world --

466 *The Chair. Thank you.

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467 *Mr. Chew. -- expressing content --

468 *The Chair. Thank you.

469 *Mr. Chew. -- on that topic and many others.

470 *The Chair. Thank you. What about the massacre in
471 Tiananmen Square, yes or no?

472 *Mr. Chew. I am sorry, I didn't hear the question.

473 *The Chair. The massacre in Tiananmen Square.

474 *Mr. Chew. That kind of content is available on our
475 platform. You can go and search it.

476 *The Chair. I will remind you that making false or
477 misleading statements to Congress is a Federal crime.

478 *Mr. Chew. I understand. Again, you can go --

479 *The Chair. Okay, thank you.

480 *Mr. Chew. -- on our platform. You will find that
481 content.

482 *The Chair. Next question -- okay, thank you.
483 Reclaiming my time, can you say with 100 percent certainty
484 that ByteDance or the CCP cannot use your company or its
485 divisions to heat content to promote pro-CCP messages for an
486 act of aggression against Taiwan?

487 *Mr. Chew. We do not promote or remove content at the

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488 request of the Chinese Government.

489 *The Chair. The question is --

490 *Mr. Chew. We will --

491 *The Chair. The question is are you 100 percent certain
492 that they cannot use your company to promote such messages?

493 *Mr. Chew. It is our commitment to this committee and
494 all our users that we will keep this free from any
495 manipulation --

496 *The Chair. If you can't -- okay.

497 *Mr. Chew. -- by any government.

498 *The Chair. If you can't say 100 percent certain, I
499 take that as a no.

500 As I previously referenced, TikTok spied on American
501 journalists. Can you say with 100 percent certainty that
502 neither ByteDance nor TikTok employees can target other
503 Americans with similar surveillance techniques?

504 *Mr. Chew. Chair Rodgers, I, first of all, disagree
505 with the characterization that it is spying. It was an
506 internal investigation on --

507 *The Chair. Surveillance. Yes or no, can you do
508 surveillance of other Americans?

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509 *Mr. Chew. We will protect the U.S. user data and fire
510 it all from all unwanted foreign access is a commitment that
511 we have given to the committee.

512 *The Chair. So I guess my question is, can -- I want
513 you to -- I wanted to hear you say with 100 percent certainty
514 that neither ByteDance nor TikTok employees can target other
515 Americans with similar surveillance techniques as you did
516 with the journalists.

517 *Mr. Chew. Again, I disagree with the characterization
518 as surveillance, and we have given our commitments, Chair
519 Rodgers, the four commitments. I think -- is our commitment
520 that we will not be influenced by any government on these
521 issues.

522 *The Chair. DoJ is investigating this surveillance
523 right now.

524 To the American people watching today, hear this:
525 TikTok is a weapon by the Chinese Communist Party to spy on
526 you, manipulate what you see, and exploit for future
527 generations. A ban is only a short-term way to address
528 TikTok. And a data privacy bill is the only way to stop
529 TikTok from ever happening again in the United States.

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530 I yield back. I now yield to the ranking member for
531 five minutes.

532 *Mr. Pallone. Thank you, Madam Chair.

533 Let me just start out by saying, Mr. Chew, that I don't
534 find what you suggested with Project Texas and this firewall
535 that is being suggested to whoever will be acceptable to me.
536 In other words, you know, the -- I still believe that the
537 Beijing communist government will still control and have the
538 ability to influence what you do. And so this idea, this
539 Project Texas, is simply not acceptable.

540 According to a recent report, TikTok is on target to
541 make between 15 and \$18 billion in revenue this year. Is
542 that an accurate forecast?

543 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, as a private company we are not
544 sharing our --

545 *Mr. Pallone. I thought that is what you would say.

546 *Mr. Chew. -- numbers publicly.

547 *Mr. Pallone. How much money will TikTok make by
548 delivering personalized advertisements just to your users in
549 the United States? Will you give me that information?

550 *Mr. Chew. Again, Congressman, respectfully --

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551 *Mr. Pallone. I thought --

552 *Mr. Chew. -- as a private company, we are not
553 disclosing that.

554 *Mr. Pallone. I thought that is what you would say.

555 Look, my -- the impression you are giving -- and I know,
556 you know, I can understand why you are trying to give that
557 impression -- is that, you know, that you are just performing
558 some kind of public service here, right? I mean, this is a
559 benign company that is just performing a public service. I -
560 - maybe you are not, maybe that is not what you are saying,
561 but I don't buy it, right?

562 My concern here is primarily about the privacy issue,
563 the fact that TikTok is making all kinds of money by
564 gathering private information about Americans that they don't
565 need for their business purposes, and then they sell it.

566 And I mentioned this legislation that the chair and I
567 have that would minimize data collection, and make it much
568 more difficult for TikTok and other companies to do that. So
569 what -- if you want to make some commitments today, why don't
570 -- I will ask you to make some commitments with regard to
571 this legislation. And, you know, you are going to tell me,

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572 well, the bill isn't passed, and so therefore I don't have to
573 do it. But, you know, you say you are benign, you want to do
574 good things for the public.

575 So let me ask you, why not -- what about a commitment
576 that says that you won't sell the data that you collect,
577 would you commit to that, not selling the data you collect?

578 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I believe we don't sell data to
579 any data brokers.

580 *Mr. Pallone. You don't sell it to anyone.

581 *Mr. Chew. We don't sell data to data brokers.

582 *Mr. Pallone. I didn't ask you -- data brokers. Do you
583 sell it to anyone?

584 In other words, under our bill, you could only use the
585 data for your own purposes, not to sell it to anyone. Would
586 you commit to not selling your data to anyone?

587 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I actually am in support of
588 some rules about privacy --

589 *Mr. Pallone. I didn't ask you whether --

590 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

591 *Mr. Pallone. -- rules. I asked you whether the
592 company, TikTok, would commit to not selling its data to

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593 anyone, and just using it for its own purposes internally.

594 *Mr. Chew. I can get back to you on the details of
595 that.

596 *Mr. Pallone. Okay, get back to me. All right.

597 Another thing that is in our bill says that we would
598 prohibit targeting marketing to people under the age of 17.
599 Would you be willing to agree to prohibit targeted marketing
600 to people, Americans, under the age of 17?

601 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, we have actually stricter rules
602 for our advertisers in terms of what they can show to our
603 users --

604 *Mr. Pallone. So do you prohibit --

605 *Mr. Chew. -- under the age of 18.

606 *Mr. Pallone. Would you be willing to prohibit targeted
607 marketing to those under 17? That is what is in our bill.

608 *Mr. Chew. I understand that there is some talk and
609 some legislation around this around the country --

610 *Mr. Pallone. Well, again, I am not interested -- I
611 wanted you to make that commitment without the legislation.
612 Since you say you are a good company, you want to do good
613 things, why not?

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

614 *Mr. Chew. It is something we can look into and get
615 back to you.

616 *Mr. Pallone. Okay, I appreciate that. Okay, we also
617 have in our bill a requirement of heightened protection for
618 sensitive data, particularly location and health data. Would
619 you commit to not gathering or dealing with location or
620 health data unless you get affirmative consent from the
621 consumer?

622 In other words, under our bill those are categorized as
623 sensitive. And unless the person specifically says, "I want
624 you to collect that data," you wouldn't be able to, location
625 and health data. Would you commit to that?

626 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, in principle I support that,
627 which -- by the way, we do not collect precise GPS data at
628 this point, and I do not believe we collect any health data.

629 *Mr. Pallone. All right. So would you be willing to
630 make that commitment, that from now on you won't collect
631 location and health data without -- well, you are saying at
632 all. Is that a commitment?

633 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, this is data that is frequently
634 collected by many other companies.

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635 *Mr. Pallone. I know other companies do it. I don't
636 think they should without affirmative consent. You said you
637 want to be a good actor, so why not make that commitment to
638 me today?

639 *Mr. Chew. We are committed to be very transparent with
640 our users about what we collect. I don't think what we
641 collect -- I don't believe what we collect is more than most
642 players --

643 *Mr. Pallone. You see --

644 *Mr. Chew. -- in the industry --

645 *Mr. Pallone. -- my problem here is you are trying to
646 give the impression that you are going to move away from
647 Beijing and the Communist Party. You are trying to give the
648 impression that you are a good actor. But the commitments
649 that we would seek to achieve those goals are not being made
650 today. They are just not being made. You are going to
651 continue to gather data. You are going to continue to sell
652 data. You are going to continue to do all these things, and
653 continue to be under the egis of the Communist Party through
654 the -- through your, you know, organization that owns you.
655 So in any case, thank you.

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656 Thank you, Madam Chair.

657 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair now
658 recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Burgess, for five
659 minutes.

660 *Mr. Burgess. I thank the chair. Thank you, Mr. Chew,
661 for joining us today.

662 I think we have heard you say multiple times that TikTok
663 is not a Chinese company, that ByteDance is not a Chinese
664 company. But according to an article in today's Wall Street
665 Journal -- quoting here -- "China's Commerce Ministry said
666 Thursday that a sale or divestiture of TikTok will involve
667 exporting technology that has to be approved by the Chinese
668 Government.'" Continuing to quote, "The reported efforts by
669 the Biden Administration would severely undermine global
670 investors' confidence in the U.S.," said Shu Jueting, a
671 ministry spokeswoman. Continuing to quote, "If that is true,
672 China will firmly oppose it," she said, referring to the
673 forced sale.

674 So despite your assertions to the contrary, China
675 certainly thinks it is in control of TikTok and its software.
676 Is that not correct?

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677 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, TikTok is not available in
678 mainland China. And today we are headquartered in Los
679 Angeles and Singapore. But I am not saying that, you know,
680 the founders of ByteDance are not Chinese, nor am I saying
681 that we don't make use of Chinese employees, just like many
682 other companies around the world. We do, you know, use their
683 expertise on some engineering projects.

684 Now --

685 *Mr. Burgess. But according to their ministry
686 spokeswoman, it would be a divestiture of exporting
687 technology from China. So they -- again, China thinks they
688 own it, even though you do not.

689 Madam Chair, I would just like to ask unanimous consent
690 to put today's Wall Street Journal article --

691 *The Chair. Without objection, so ordered.

692 *Mr. Burgess. -- into the record.

693 [The information follows:]

694

695 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

696

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697 *Mr. Burgess. Now, Mr. Chew, I wouldn't ask you to
698 discuss any privileged attorney-client materials, but did
699 anyone, aside from your lawyers, assist you in preparation
700 for today's hearing?

701 *Mr. Chew. I prepared for this hearing with my team
702 here in D.C.

703 *Mr. Burgess. Did anyone at ByteDance directly provide
704 input, help, or instruction for your testimony today?

705 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, this is a very high-profile
706 hearing. My phone is full of well-wishers, you know, but I
707 prepared for this hearing with my team here in D.C.

708 *Mr. Burgess. Are you willing to share who helped
709 prepare you for this hearing with the committee? And you can
710 do that in writing.

711 *Mr. Chew. I can follow up with you, if you like.

712 *Mr. Burgess. Okay. Can you guarantee that no one at
713 ByteDance had a role in preparing you for today's hearing?

714 *Mr. Chew. Like I said, Congressman, this is a high-
715 profile hearing. A lot of people around the world were
716 sending me wishes and unsolicited advice, but I prepared for
717 this hearing with my team here in D.C..

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718 *Mr. Burgess. Are the attorneys representing TikTok
719 also representing ByteDance?

720 *Mr. Chew. Yes, I believe so.

721 *Mr. Burgess. What percentage of TikTok revenue does
722 ByteDance retain? Just give me a ballpark estimate, if you
723 don't precisely know.

724 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, like I said, as a private
725 company we are not prepared to disclose our financials in
726 public today.

727 *Mr. Burgess. Can we ask you to get back to us with a
728 ballpark? We are not asking for the precise figures, but to
729 get -- so the committee can have some understanding of the
730 percentage of TikTok revenue that ByteDance retains.

731 *Mr. Chew. I understand the question. Respectfully, as
732 a private company we are not disclosing our financials today.

733 *Mr. Burgess. Prior to today's hearing, did anyone
734 affiliated with the Chinese Communist Party discuss this
735 hearing with you or anyone else on TikTok's senior
736 management?

737 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, since I have been CEO of this
738 company I have not had any discussions with Chinese

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739 Government officials.

740 *Mr. Burgess. So what -- but what about the Chinese
741 Communist Party itself? Have any of those officials
742 discussed this with you?

743 *Mr. Chew. Like I said, I have not had any discussion
744 with Chinese Government officials. I don't know the
745 political affiliation of everybody I speak to, so I can't
746 verify the statement.

747 *Mr. Burgess. Let me ask you a question in a different
748 direction.

749 A few weeks ago this committee had a field hearing down
750 in McAllen, Texas, and it was on the issue of fentanyl and
751 illegal immigration. And one of our witnesses, Brandon Judd,
752 a 25-year veteran Border Patrol agent, said that all social
753 media platforms play a role in illegal immigration. That is
754 one of the ways cartels advertise their services throughout
755 the world and convince people to put themselves in their
756 hands and come to the United States. The cartels all use
757 social media platforms. Are you aware of this phenomenon?

758 *Mr. Chew. Any content that promotes human abuse is
759 violative of our community guidelines, which dictates what is

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760 allowed and not allowed on our platform. We proactively
761 identify and remove them from our platform.

762 *Mr. Burgess. Well, it would be very helpful if you
763 would share with the committee examples of how you have
764 removed people, because what we heard at the hearing was that
765 TikTok was one of the platforms that recruits adolescents in
766 the United States to help with transporting people who are in
767 the -- who have been trafficked into the country, as well as
768 contraband substances. Would you help us with that,
769 understanding who you have removed from your platform?

770 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I would be delighted to check
771 with my team and get back to yours, and be collaborative.

772 *Mr. Burgess. Thank you.

773 I yield back.

774 *The Chair. The gentleman's time has expired. The
775 chair recognizes the lady from California, Ms. Eshoo, for
776 five minutes.

777 *Ms. Eshoo. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

778 Mr. Chew, thank you for being here today.

779 As Members of Congress, our very first and top
780 responsibility is to protect and defend, protect and defend

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781 our Constitution and the national security of our country.
782 So I view this entire issue -- now, there are many parts of
783 it that are not part of our national security, in my view,
784 but first and foremost, our national security.

785 So in examining TikTok breaking away from ByteDance, I
786 would like to ask you some questions about that, and how a
787 severance in terms of the relationship with ByteDance, how
788 user data, American user data, would be protected. Now,
789 under Beijing's security laws, article 7 compels companies to
790 provide data; article 10 makes the reach of the law
791 extraterritorial. Now, this is very clear. I don't need to
792 read all of it into the record, but those are the laws of the
793 PRC.

794 How does ByteDance -- how does TikTok, rather -- how do
795 you convince the Congress of the United States that there can
796 be a clean break? Why would the Chinese Government sidestep
797 their national law, including article 7, article 10, in terms
798 of user data?

799 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, thank you for the question. I
800 am glad you asked this.

801 As I said in the opening statement, our plan is to move

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802 American data to be stored on American soil by an American
803 company --

804 *Ms. Eshoo. I understand that. I understand that. But
805 you are sidestepping -- or I haven't read anything in terms
806 of TikTok -- how you can actually say -- and you spoke in
807 your opening statement about a firewall relative to the data,
808 but the Chinese Government has that data. What -- how can
809 you promise that that will move into the United States of
810 America and be protected here?

811 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, I have seen no evidence that
812 the Chinese government has access to that data. They have
813 never asked us. We have not provided.

814 *Ms. Eshoo. Well, you know what? I find that --

815 *Mr. Chew. I have asked that question --

816 *Ms. Eshoo. I find that actually preposterous.

817 *Mr. Chew. I have looked, and --

818 *Ms. Eshoo. I really do.

819 *Mr. Chew. -- I have seen no evidence of this
820 happening. And in order to assure everybody here and all our
821 users, our commitment is to move the data into the United
822 States, to be stored on American soil by an American company,

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823 overseen by American personnel. So the risk will be similar
824 to any government going to an American company asking for
825 data, if that --

826 *Ms. Eshoo. Well, I am one that doesn't believe that
827 there is really a private sector in China. And when you look
828 at their national law, and what -- specifically, these two
829 articles, article 7 and article 10, are very clear. So I
830 think that there is a real problem, a real problem relative
831 to our national security about the protection of the user
832 data.

833 I don't believe that TikTok has -- that you have said or
834 done anything to convince us that that information, the
835 personal information of 150 million Americans, that the
836 Chinese Government is not going to give that up. So can you
837 tell me --

838 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, if I --

839 *Ms. Eshoo. Can you tell me who writes the algorithms
840 for TikTok?

841 *Mr. Chew. Today the algorithm that powers the U.S.
842 user experience is running in the Oracle Cloud
843 infrastructure.

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844 Yes, you know, in the -- initially, there were parts of
845 the source code, especially in the infrastructure layer, that
846 doesn't touch the user experience. Now, that is a
847 collaborative global effort, including built by engineers in
848 China, just like many other companies, by the way. The phone
849 you use, the car you drive is a global collaborative effort.
850 Now, but today the business sites and the main parts of the
851 code for TikTok is written by TikTok employees.

852 And, Congresswoman, what we are offering is third-party
853 monitoring of our source code. I am not aware of any
854 company, American companies or otherwise, that has actually
855 done that, because we are saying we want to give you
856 transparency and rely on third parties to make sure that we
857 get all the comfort that we need about the experience.

858 *Ms. Eshoo. Well, I -- my time is up, and I yield back.
859 Thank you.

860 *The Chair. The lady yields back. I am pleased to
861 yield to the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Latta, for five
862 minutes.

863 *Mr. Latta. Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Unlike the
864 Chinese Communist Party, the United States believes in

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865 individual freedom, innovation, and entrepreneurship. That
866 is in part why Congress enacted section 230 of the
867 Communications Decency Act. Our goal is to promote growth of
868 the online ecosystem in the United States, and to protect
869 companies from being held liable for good faith efforts to
870 moderate their platforms.

871 Last year a Federal judge in Pennsylvania found that
872 section 230 protected TikTok from being held responsible for
873 the death of a 10-year old girl who participated in a
874 blackout challenge also known as the Choking Challenge.
875 TikTok actively pushed this video on her feed.
876 Unfortunately, this is one of the many devastating examples
877 of children losing their lives because of content promoted by
878 TikTok.

879 Section 230 was never intended to shield companies like
880 yours from amplifying dangerous and life-threatening content
881 to children. Do you consider this to be a good faith
882 moderation?

883 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, as a father myself, when I hear
884 about the tragic deaths of --

885 *Mr. Latta. And my question --

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886 *Mr. Chew. -- people, it is heartbreaking.

887 *Mr. Latta. Do you find that good faith moderation?

888 *Mr. Chew. Well, Congressman, section 230 is a very
889 complex issue.

890 *Mr. Latta. Okay, you know, yes or no?

891 *Mr. Chew. We are very focused on safety, and all these
892 dangerous --

893 *Mr. Latta. Okay, I am going to have to --

894 *Mr. Chew. -- challenges are removed when we find them.

895 *Mr. Latta. -- assume that is a no.

896 Do you believe TikTok deserves this liability
897 protection?

898 *Mr. Chew. I am sorry, Congressman, I didn't --

899 *Mr. Latta. Do you believe that TikTok deserves this
900 liability protection under section 230?

901 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, as you pointed out, 230 has
902 been very important for freedom of expression on the
903 Internet. It is one of the commitments we have given to this
904 community and our users, and I do think it is important to
905 preserve that.

906 But companies should be raising the bar on safety. I

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907 really agree with that --

908 *Mr. Latta. Let me follow up real quickly, from your
909 own testimony. When you told us -- and you repeated it --
910 "We will keep safety, particularly for teenagers, a top
911 priority for us," you are saying you are making that
912 following commitment. Why did you have to wait until now to
913 make that following commitment now, and not having done it
914 before, when this 10-year-old lost her life?

915 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I am reiterating the commitment
916 internally in all my priorities, which is public to my
917 employees --

918 *Mr. Latta. Okay, this is a --

919 *Mr. Chew. Safety has always been a priority.

920 *Mr. Latta. This company is a picture perfect example
921 of why this committee in Congress needs to take action
922 immediately to amend section 230.

923 When we recently met I asked you if the Chinese
924 Communist Party can currently access user data, and you did
925 not have a clear answer. So today I want to follow up. You
926 heard it a little bit, but I want to be absolutely sure of
927 this answer.

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928 Are employees of ByteDance subject to Chinese law,
929 including the 2017 national intelligence law which requires
930 any organization or citizen to support, assist, and cooperate
931 with state intelligence work in accordance with the law?

932 *Mr. Chew. Like many companies, including many American
933 companies, we rely on a global workforce, including engineers
934 in China.

935 *Mr. Latta. Okay, but yes or no --

936 *Mr. Chew. So in the past, yes. In the past, yes, yes.
937 But we are building Project Texas, and we are committing to
938 firewall off --

939 *Mr. Latta. Okay, I am taking that as --

940 *Mr. Chew. -- all protected data from unwanted foreign
941 access.

942 *Mr. Latta. I am taking that as a yes, because, again,
943 your article 7 -- the Article 7 of the 2017 national
944 intelligence law, which I just said, because it says, in
945 addition -- as was asked a little bit earlier -- the 2014
946 counter-espionage law states that when the state security
947 organ investigates and understands the situation of espionage
948 and collects relevant evidence, the relevant organizations

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949 and individuals -- it does not say "may"; it says "shall"
950 provide it truthfully, and may not refuse.

951 Yes or no, do any ByteDance employees in China,
952 including engineers, currently have access to U.S. user data?

953 *Mr. Chew. Today all U.S. user data is stored by
954 default in the Oracle Cloud infrastructure --

955 *Mr. Latta. Answer the question.

956 *Mr. Chew. -- and access to that is controlled --

957 *Mr. Latta. The question is do any ByteDance --

958 *Mr. Chew. -- by American personnel.

959 *Mr. Latta. -- employees in China, including engineers,
960 currently have access to U.S. data?

961 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I would appreciate -- this is a
962 complex topic. Today all data is stored by default --

963 *Mr. Latta. Yes or no? It is not that complex. Yes or
964 no, do they have access to user data?

965 *Mr. Chew. We have -- after Project Texas is done, the
966 answer is no. Today there is still some data that we need --

967 *Mr. Latta. Yes, we have --

968 *Mr. Chew. -- to delete --

969 *Mr. Latta. Yes, we have heard already from the ranking

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970 member that he hasn't, and -- that he doesn't really see that
971 Project Texas is going to be useful.

972 So I think I am taking that as a no because, again, the
973 question is -- come up earlier -- that on December the 22nd
974 of last year, when ByteDance confirmed some of its Chinese
975 employees had accessed TikTok data to monitor and track the
976 physical location of journalists. So I took that as a yes
977 from an earlier answer.

978 You know, earlier this week you posted a TikTok video
979 asking American users to mobilize in support of your app and
980 oppose the potential U.S. government action to ban TikTok in
981 the United States. Based on the established relationship
982 between your company and the Chinese Communist Party, it is
983 impossible for me to conclude that the video is anything
984 different than the type of propaganda the CCP requires
985 Chinese companies to push on its citizens.

986 And I yield back.

987 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
988 recognizes the lady from Colorado, Ms. DeGette, for five
989 minutes.

990 *Ms. DeGette. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

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991 Mr. Chew, like my colleagues I am concerned about the
992 influence of China on TikTok, and what that does for U.S.
993 users. But I am also concerned about how the content in
994 TikTok is being distributed, particularly to young people.

995 This is not a problem unique to TikTok, but TikTok has
996 150 million users in the United States, and so I think you
997 will agree that TikTok has a particular responsibility to
998 monitor content to make sure that it is safe and accurate.
999 Would that be fair to say?

1000 *Mr. Chew. Yes, I agree with that.

1001 *Ms. DeGette. So, you know, I know you said in your
1002 opening statement there is a ban for or limited for kids
1003 under 13 and under 18, and so on. But I am -- I know it
1004 won't be news for you that computer-savvy kids actually can
1005 bypass some of those restrictions quite frequently, and they
1006 can do it even if they have parental oversight.

1007 And so what I want to ask you is, rather than putting
1008 the burden on young people and parents to accurately put in
1009 the birth date and so on when registering for TikTok, I want
1010 to ask you what TikTok can do to make sure to monitor this
1011 content.

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1012 And I want to give you some examples of some of the
1013 extreme content. Mr. Latta talked about the Blackout
1014 Challenge, and the -- some of the dangers to young people's
1015 safety. But there is also extreme content around health care
1016 information.

1017 In one study, 13 out of 20 results for the question,
1018 "Does mugwort induce abortion." it is -- it talked about
1019 herbal so-called abortifacients like papaya seeds, which
1020 don't work. And so, if people searching for information on
1021 safe abortions went on TikTok, they could get devastatingly
1022 incorrect information.

1023 Another study showed that TikTok was -- had a
1024 hydroxychloroquine tutorial on how to fabricate this from
1025 grapefruit. Now, there is two problems with that. Number
1026 one, hydroxychloroquine is not effective in treating COVID.
1027 So that is one issue. The second issue is you can't even
1028 make hydroxychloroquine from grapefruit. So, again, this is
1029 a really serious miscommunication about health care
1030 information that people looking at TikTok are able to get.
1031 And in fact, it is being pushed out to them.

1032 So I want to know from you -- and I will give you time

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1033 to answer this -- you have current controls, but the current
1034 controls are not working to keep this information mainly from
1035 young people, but from Americans in general. What more is
1036 TikTok doing to try to strengthen its review to keep this
1037 information from coming across to people?

1038 *Mr. Chew. Thank you for the question, Congresswoman.
1039 The dangerous misinformation that you mentioned is not
1040 allowed on our platform. It violates them.

1041 *Ms. DeGette. I am sorry to report it is on your
1042 platform, though.

1043 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, I don't think I can sit here
1044 and say that we are perfect in doing this. We do work very
1045 hard --

1046 *Ms. DeGette. How can you make yourself more perfect?
1047 I don't want you to say it is not there, or you apologize.
1048 What can you do to limit it as much as possible, more than
1049 what you are doing now?

1050 *Mr. Chew. We invest a significant amount in our
1051 content moderation work. I shared that number in our -- in
1052 my written testimony.

1053 *Ms. DeGette. I know you are investing.

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

1054 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

1055 *Ms. DeGette. But what steps are you taking to improve
1056 the AI, or whatever else you are doing to limit this content?

1057 *Mr. Chew. For example, if you search for certain
1058 search terms, we do direct you on TikTok to resource --
1059 safety resources. That is one of the things we have done.
1060 We will continue to invest in this.

1061 I recognize and fully align with you that this is a
1062 problem that faces our industry, that we need to really
1063 invest and address. I am very in alignment.

1064 The vast majority of our users come to our platform for
1065 entertaining, safe content. But there are people who do have
1066 some -- who do spout some dangerous misinformation, and we
1067 need to take that very seriously, invest in it, proactively
1068 identify it, and remove it from our platform.

1069 *Ms. DeGette. Okay. I am going to stop you right now.
1070 I asked you specifically how you were increasing -- how you
1071 were trying to increase your review of this, and you gave me
1072 only generalized statements that you are investing, that you
1073 are concerned, that you are doing more. That is not enough
1074 for me. That is not enough for the parents of America.

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

1075 I am going to ask you to supplement your testimony, and
1076 have your experts tell me what you are doing to make this a
1077 higher level of scrutiny, not just pablum at a hearing.
1078 Thank you.

1079 I yield back.

1080 *Mr. Chew. Thank you.

1081 *The Chair. The lady yields back. The chair recognizes
1082 the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Hudson, for five
1083 minutes.

1084 *Mr. Hudson. Thank you, Chairwoman McMorris Rodgers,
1085 for holding this important hearing. I appreciate the
1086 witness, Mr. Shou Chew, for making yourself available here
1087 today.

1088 While many consider TikTok to be just another video
1089 sharing app, in reality TikTok has been functioning as a
1090 massive surveillance program, collecting vast swaths of
1091 personal data from more than a billion people worldwide.
1092 This includes data from the personal devices of Federal
1093 employees, contractors, and, most concerning, U.S. military
1094 service members and their families at places like Fort Bragg
1095 in North Carolina.

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1096 As Fort Bragg's congressman, I have serious concerns
1097 about the opportunities TikTok gives the Chinese Communist
1098 Party to access the non-public, sensitive data of our men and
1099 women in uniform. This personal data and location
1100 information can be harvested, and could be used for
1101 blackmail, to conduct espionage, and possibly even reveal
1102 troop movements.

1103 While the Department of Defense and most agencies have
1104 banned TikTok on government-issued devices, I believe more
1105 needs to be done at the command level to urge troops and
1106 their dependents to erase the app from the personal devices,
1107 and keep them off home WiFi. Having an app banned on a
1108 device in one pocket but downloaded on your device in the
1109 other doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. I believe
1110 Congress and DoD should address the continued use of TikTok
1111 on military installations, as well as any use that depicts
1112 U.S. military operations.

1113 Mr. Chew, does TikTok access the home WiFi network?

1114 *Mr. Chew. Only if the user turns on the WiFi. I am
1115 sorry, I may not understand the --

1116 *Mr. Hudson. So if I have the TikTok app on my phone,

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1117 and my phone is on my home WiFi network, does TikTok access
1118 that network?

1119 *Mr. Chew. It will have to access the network to get
1120 connections to the Internet, if that is the question.

1121 *Mr. Hudson. Is it possible, then, that it could access
1122 other devices on that home WiFi network?

1123 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, we do not do anything that is
1124 beyond any industry norms. I believe the answer to your
1125 question is no. It could be technical. Let me get back to
1126 you.

1127 *Mr. Hudson. Okay. I would appreciate it if you could
1128 answer that.

1129 I would like to change directions real quick. Do you
1130 receive personal employment, salary, compensation, or
1131 benefits from ByteDance?

1132 *Mr. Chew. Yes, I do.

1133 *Mr. Hudson. What is your salary from ByteDance?

1134 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, if you don't mind, I would
1135 prefer to keep my compensation private.

1136 *Mr. Hudson. Okay. Do you personally have any company
1137 shares or stock in ByteDance or Douyin?

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1138 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, if you don't mind, I would like
1139 to keep my personal assets private.

1140 *Mr. Hudson. Is TikTok, the company, your only source
1141 of employment compensation? Where is your other source of
1142 income outside of TikTok?

1143 *Mr. Chew. It is my only source of compensation.

1144 *Mr. Hudson. Do you have any financial debts or
1145 obligations to ByteDance, Douyin, or any other ByteDance-
1146 affiliated entity?

1147 *Mr. Chew. Personally? No, I do not.

1148 *Mr. Hudson. Does your management team receive separate
1149 salary, compensation, or benefits from ByteDance?

1150 *Mr. Chew. We receive salaries from the employer -- the
1151 entities that we are employed in, but we --

1152 *Mr. Hudson. Is that --

1153 *Mr. Chew. -- do share in the employee stock option
1154 plan that is available from the ByteDance top company.

1155 *Mr. Hudson. So your primary salary comes from TikTok,
1156 but you have other compensation that comes directly from
1157 ByteDance?

1158 *Mr. Chew. You can characterize it as that, yes.

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1159 *Mr. Hudson. Does your management team have company
1160 shares or stock in ByteDance or Douyin?

1161 *Mr. Chew. Yes, we -- some of our employees are
1162 compensated in shares in ByteDance.

1163 *Mr. Hudson. Does TikTok share technological resources
1164 with Douyin?

1165 Are the two technology systems or IT systems
1166 interconnected in any way?

1167 *Mr. Chew. They are. As with many companies, some
1168 share resources on some services, but it doesn't include --
1169 anything that involves U.S. user data, Congressman, is in
1170 Project Texas, as we talked about, stored by default in
1171 American soil by an American company.

1172 *Mr. Hudson. Well, but currently there is shared
1173 technology or interconnected IT systems.

1174 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, with respect, I have to get
1175 back to you. This could be a very broad question. Like, for
1176 example, we could all be using Microsoft Windows.

1177 *Mr. Hudson. If you could get back with details on
1178 that, I would appreciate it.

1179 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

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1180 *Mr. Hudson. Can Douyin personnel or employees access
1181 TikTok user data?

1182 *Mr. Chew. Not after Project Texas. This is not
1183 allowed.

1184 *Mr. Hudson. Are there employees who are employed by
1185 both Douyin and TikTok?

1186 *Mr. Chew. I do not believe so.

1187 *Mr. Hudson. Okay. So, "I don't believe so," is that
1188 a -- I mean, again, I will allow you to come back in written
1189 response, if you could give me a definitive answer.

1190 *Mr. Chew. I will go back and check to be very sure.

1191 *Mr. Hudson. Okay. Thank you. I am also concerned
1192 about an issue that our chairwoman brought up about an
1193 apparent pattern of misinformation or misrepresentation from
1194 your company in regards to the amount and extent of data that
1195 you are collecting, as well as how much has been accessed
1196 from inside China.

1197 There are dozens of public reports that conclude
1198 individuals in the People's Republic of China have been
1199 accessing data on U.S. users, directly contradicting several
1200 public statements by TikTok employees. And I am referencing

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1201 Project Raven, which was first reported on by Forbes last
1202 October. Their investigation revealed -- I am sorry, I am
1203 about out of time. Do you want to respond to that?

1204 *Mr. Chew. Yes, Congressman. We do not condone the
1205 effort by certain former employees to access U.S. TikTok user
1206 data in an attempt to identify the source of leaked
1207 confidential information. We condemn these actions.

1208 After learning about them, we found a highly reputable
1209 law firm to thoroughly investigate the incident. We took
1210 swift disciplinary action against employees who were found to
1211 be involved, and are implementing measures to make sure this
1212 doesn't happen again. We have made this team available to
1213 you. They -- I think they have briefed many of you in this
1214 committee very extensively, and I will continue to make them
1215 very available to you as part of our transparent commitment.

1216 *Mr. Hudson. Thank you. My time is expired.

1217 I yield back.

1218 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
1219 recognizes the lady from Illinois, Ms. Schakowsky, for five
1220 minutes.

1221 *Ms. Schakowsky. Thank you. So today in The Wall

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1222 Street Journal, they said -- today China's commerce minister
1223 said that China opposes the sale of TikTok because it would
1224 involve exporting China's technology, and would -- and this
1225 is the important part -- and would need to be approved by the
1226 Chinese Government, would need to be approved by the Chinese
1227 Government.

1228 So all of what you have been saying about the distance
1229 between TikTok and China has been said to be not true in the
1230 in the paper today. And I would like to see what you have to
1231 say in response.

1232 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, I do disagree with that
1233 characterization. I think we have designed Project Texas to
1234 protect U.S. user interests, and to move forward here in the
1235 U.S.

1236 Again, it is the protections of storing American data on
1237 American soil by an American company looked after by American
1238 personnel. And I do not think that the -- you know, our
1239 commitments to this committee and all our users is impacted
1240 by any event that you mentioned.

1241 Now, the whole, you know, discussion on this, the
1242 resolution of this, is an ongoing and developing event. So

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1243 we will continue to pay attention to this, and we will get
1244 back to you when we have more specifics. But my commitment
1245 stands --

1246 *Ms. Schakowsky. So if -- okay.

1247 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

1248 *Ms. Schakowsky. So if it is an ongoing debate,
1249 apparently with China -- so it is hard to say with any
1250 certainty that China would not have any influence.

1251 But let me ask another question. So last fall, along
1252 with Gus Bilirakis, who -- were chair and co-chair of the
1253 subcommittee together -- were told that TikTok had surveilled
1254 -- was involved in surveillance of users' very personal
1255 information. And you might say, well, not more than other
1256 companies. And I agree with Ranking Member Pallone that I
1257 really don't want to go by that standard, particularly, but
1258 that TikTok's in-app browser surveilled everything from
1259 Americans, including passwords and credit card numbers, et
1260 cetera.

1261 So I just want to ask you if TikTok did track and
1262 collect this sensitive data that Americans don't want to have
1263 disclosed.

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1264 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, thank you. I am glad you asked
1265 this question because, like you pointed out, we actually do
1266 not believe we collect more data than any other social media
1267 company out there. A lot of these reports -- and I -- we can
1268 talk about which specific one you are talking about -- a lot
1269 of them are not that accurate. Some of them we have
1270 contacted, we have actually gotten in touch with the authors
1271 to help them understand the data that we are collecting. A
1272 lot of it is speculation. You know, this is something they
1273 could do, they could do.

1274 But if you look at the subtext, this is something that
1275 any company could do --

1276 *Ms. Schakowsky. So I am running out of time. Let me
1277 just say that if TikTok chose not to take the sensitive --
1278 this sensitive information that you don't need for a
1279 transaction and support our comprehensive privacy bill, that
1280 would be very helpful.

1281 The other thing I wanted to ask -- so really, this is a
1282 yes or no, that TikTok -- does TikTok share user information
1283 from companies, from parent companies, from affiliated or --
1284 or send user information to -- overseas?

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1285 *Mr. Chew. In the past, yes, for interoperability
1286 purposes. Now, after Project Texas, all protected U.S. data
1287 will be stored here, with the access controlled by a special
1288 team of U.S. personnel.

1289 Again, Congresswoman, this is something that, as far as
1290 I understand, no other company, including American companies,
1291 are willing to go. So maybe this is something that we can
1292 ask the industry to provide, not just us, to protect U.S. --

1293 *Ms. Schakowsky. In case of sharing information, I do
1294 want to quote from employees that you had that -- and here is
1295 the quote -- "Everything is seen in China," is really what
1296 they said. People who were in touch with the sensitive data
1297 were saying that. How do you respond to that?

1298 *Mr. Chew. I disagree with that statement.

1299 *Ms. Schakowsky. Well, I know you disagree with that
1300 statement. But my point is, how does that happen that
1301 employees of the company are saying that, in fact, that is
1302 not true?

1303 *Mr. Chew. I cannot speak to -- I don't know who this
1304 person is, so I cannot speak to what a person has or has not
1305 said. What I can say is, you know, based on my position in

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1306 this company and the responsibility that I have, that
1307 statement is just not true.

1308 *Ms. Schakowsky. Okay. Unfortunately -- and I will
1309 close, I guess I am over my time -- we need to look into the
1310 facts of this, and so do you.

1311 And I yield back.

1312 *The Chair. The gentlelady yields back. The chair
1313 recognizes the lady from Florida, Mrs. Cammack, for five
1314 minutes.

1315 *Mrs. Cammack. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

1316 Mr. Chew, are you aware of Chinese Communist Party
1317 leader Chairman Xi Jinping's comments in May 2021 during a
1318 Communist Politburo study session, where he instructed
1319 colleagues to target different countries, different audiences
1320 with short-form video? Are you aware of these comments, yes
1321 or no?

1322 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, I am not aware of these
1323 comments.

1324 *Mrs. Cammack. Okay. Well, and as was pointed out by
1325 Chairwoman Rodgers, you have regular contact with Chinese
1326 Communist Party Secretary Mr. Zhang Fuping, who is your boss

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1327 at ByteDance, correct?

1328 *Mr. Chew. No.

1329 *Mrs. Cammack. No?

1330 *Mr. Chew. No.

1331 *Mrs. Cammack. Interesting.

1332 *Mr. Chew. He is neither my boss, nor do we have
1333 frequent contact.

1334 *Mrs. Cammack. But you have regular contact with
1335 ByteDance.

1336 *Mr. Chew. With the CEO of ByteDance.

1337 *Mrs. Cammack. Who is -- Mr. Zhang Fuping is the editor
1338 in chief.

1339 *Mr. Chew. He is not --

1340 *Mrs. Cammack. My colleague, Representative Burgess, a
1341 few minutes ago exposed that TikTok and ByteDance share legal
1342 teams. You confirmed this, correct?

1343 *Mr. Chew. Our general counsel is --

1344 *Mrs. Cammack. Yes? Yes or no?

1345 *Mr. Chew. -- an American lawyer, a veteran of
1346 Microsoft --

1347 *Mrs. Cammack. Yes. Also --

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1348 *Mr. Chew. And --

1349 *Mrs. Cammack. -- my colleague, Representative Latta,
1350 confirmed that your parent company, ByteDance, currently can
1351 access user data. Yes?

1352 *Mr. Chew. Let's --

1353 *Mrs. Cammack. Yes.

1354 *Mr. Chew. We have to be more specific.

1355 *Mrs. Cammack. Yes.

1356 *Mr. Chew. After Project Texas, no.

1357 *Mrs. Cammack. You say -- I am not asking after Project
1358 Texas. I am asking now. Yes.

1359 *Mr. Chew. Some user data is public data,
1360 Congresswoman, which means everybody --

1361 *Mrs. Cammack. So you confirm that.

1362 *Mr. Chew. -- can search around the Internet.

1363 *Mrs. Cammack. What is interesting to me is that you
1364 have used the word "transparency" over a half a dozen times
1365 in your opening testimony, and subsequently again in your
1366 answers to my colleagues. Yet the interesting thing to me is
1367 that ByteDance, your parent company, has gone out of their
1368 way to hide and airbrush corporate structure ties to the CCP,

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1369 the company's founder, and their activities.

1370 You can look no further than the fact that ByteDance's
1371 website has been scrubbed. In fact, we found web pages from
1372 the Beijing Internet Association, the industry association
1373 charged with Communist Party building work of Internet
1374 companies in Beijing. They have been archived, but since
1375 deleted. It makes you kind of wonder why.

1376 Yes or no, ByteDance is required to have a member of the
1377 Chinese Government on its board with veto power. Is that
1378 correct?

1379 *Mr. Chew. No, that is not correct. ByteDance owns
1380 some Chinese businesses, and you are talking about a very
1381 special subsidiary that is --

1382 *Mrs. Cammack. Mr. Shou --

1383 *Mr. Chew. -- for Chinese business licensing --

1384 *Mrs. Cammack. Mr. Shou, I am going to have to move on.

1385 You have said repeatedly that there is no threat, that
1386 this is an a platform for entertainment and for fun. I have
1387 to ask you then, if there is no threat to Americans, if there
1388 is no threat to our data privacy, security, why did an
1389 internal memo from TikTok corporate headquarters explicitly

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1390 coach senior management to "downplay the parent company
1391 ByteDance''? Why would they say, downplay the China
1392 Association and downplay AI?

1393 This is from an internal memo from your company. Why,
1394 if you had nothing to hide, would you need to downplay the
1395 association with ByteDance in China?

1396 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, I have not seen this memo.

1397 *Mrs. Cammack. You can't answer that question.

1398 *Mr. Chew. I can say --

1399 *Mrs. Cammack. Mr. Shou, I would like to direct your
1400 attention to the screen for a short video, if you don't mind.

1401 [Video shown.]

1402 *Mrs. Cammack. Mr. Shou, that video was posted 41 days
1403 ago. As you can see, it is captioned, "Me asf [sic] at the
1404 House Energy and Commerce Committee on March 23rd of this
1405 year.'' This video was posted before this hearing was
1406 publicly noticed. I think that is a very interesting point
1407 to raise.

1408 But more concerning is the fact that it names this
1409 chairwoman by name. Your own community guidelines state that
1410 you have a firm stance against enabling violence on or off

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1411 TikTok: "We do not allow people to use our platform to
1412 threaten or incite violence, or to promote violent extremist
1413 organizations, individuals, or acts. When there is a threat
1414 to public safety or an account is used to promote or glorify
1415 off platform violence, we ban the account.'" This video has
1416 been up for 41 days. It is a direct threat to the chairwoman
1417 of this committee, the people in this room, and yet it still
1418 remains on the platform. And you expect us to believe that
1419 you are capable of maintaining the data, security -- privacy
1420 and security of 150 million Americans, where you can't even
1421 protect the people in this room?

1422 I think that is a blatant display of how vulnerable
1423 people who use TikTok are. You couldn't take action after 41
1424 days, when a clear threat, a very violent threat to the
1425 chairwoman of this committee and the members of this
1426 committee, was posted on your platform. You damn well know
1427 that you cannot protect the data and security of this
1428 committee or the 150 million users of your app, because it is
1429 an extension of the CCP.

1430 And with that I yield back.

1431 *Mr. Chew. Can I respond, Chair?

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1432 *The Chair. No, we are going to move on. The
1433 gentlelady yields back.

1434 The chairman recognizes the lady from California, Ms.
1435 Matsui, for five minutes.

1436 *Ms. Matsui. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And I
1437 am really glad that we are having this very important hearing
1438 here today.

1439 And let me just say, make no mistake, the Chinese
1440 Government represents a real and immediate threat. Look no
1441 further than even the vulnerable gear still in our telecom
1442 networks that needs to be ripped and replaced.

1443 But we can't lose sight of the important Internet
1444 governance issues TikTok and other social media companies
1445 represent. I am especially committed to demanding
1446 transparency from large platforms about the algorithms that
1447 shape our online interactions, especially for teenagers and
1448 young users. And that is why I introduced the Algorithmic
1449 Justice and Online Platform Transparency Act to bring greater
1450 visibility into this ecosystem.

1451 My bill would require -- would prohibit algorithms that
1452 discriminate on the basis of race, age, gender, ability, and

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1453 other protected characteristics. It also would establish a
1454 safety and effectiveness standard for algorithms, while
1455 requiring new forms of oversight. Now, this bill would
1456 require online platforms to publish annual public reports
1457 detailing their content moderation practices, which I believe
1458 should be a baseline requirement to enable meaningful
1459 oversight and consumer choice.

1460 Mr. Chew, just yes or no, do you believe a requirement
1461 for annual content moderation practices for social media
1462 platforms would be beneficial? Yes or no.

1463 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

1464 *Ms. Matsui. This transparency bill would also require
1465 online platforms to maintain detailed records describing
1466 their algorithmic process for review by the Federal Trade
1467 Commission in compliance with key privacy and data
1468 de-identification standards.

1469 Mr. Chew, does TikTok currently maintain records
1470 describing their algorithmic processes? Yes or no.

1471 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I would need to check and get
1472 back to you on what kind of specific records you are talking
1473 about.

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1474 *Ms. Matsui. I will wait for that.

1475 Over the past few years, alarming information brought to
1476 light by whistleblowers have shown that social media
1477 companies are intimately aware of the effect their products
1478 have on young women, political extremism, and more. Despite
1479 this, they withheld those studies or declined to investigate
1480 further. In either case, it shows a pattern -- evasive or
1481 negligent behavior that I find concerning in the extreme.

1482 Mr. Chew, does TikTok conduct its own studies on the
1483 effect of its algorithms and content distribution models on
1484 mental health or safety?

1485 And if so, how and when are those findings made public?

1486 And if not, do you believe they are necessary?

1487 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, we rely on external third
1488 parties, and fund their research to help us understand some
1489 of these issues. For example, we worked with the Digital
1490 Wellness Lab at the Boston Children's Hospital to understand
1491 the 60-minute time limit that we put for all our under-18
1492 users. And we are supportive of legislation that provides
1493 more funding for research like, for example, for the NIH.

1494 *Ms. Matsui. Okay. TikTok tailors its recommended

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1495 content based on user activity to encourage people to spend
1496 more time on the app. While this practice is by no means
1497 unique to TikTok, given the prevalence of young users and the
1498 digestible nature of short-form video, I am concerned about
1499 the app's tendency to exacerbate existing mental health
1500 challenges.

1501 Mr. Chew, does TikTok have different policies for
1502 amplifying content that would be related to depression or
1503 dieting, versus content like gardening and sports? If yes,
1504 describe these policy differences. If no, why not?

1505 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, thank you for that. This is
1506 a great question. The answer is yes. We are trying out some
1507 policies together with experts to understand certain contents
1508 that are not inherently harmful, like extreme fitness, for
1509 example, but shouldn't be seen too much. And this is --
1510 these are models that we are building, and we are trying to
1511 understand, you know, together with experts, how to best
1512 implement them across our platform, particularly for younger
1513 users.

1514 *Ms. Matsui. Okay, so --

1515 *Mr. Chew. Under 18, yes.

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1516 *Ms. Matsui. -- in cases where users have been engaging
1517 with potentially harmful content, I believe it is imperative
1518 that the app takes steps to moderate that behavior, rather
1519 than continuing to promote it. I mean, in a sense --

1520 *Mr. Chew. I apologize, I --

1521 *Ms. Matsui. -- very intentional about that.

1522 *Mr. Chew. I wasn't clear. First, anything that is
1523 violative and harmful we remove. What I meant to say were
1524 things -- content that is not inherently harmful, like some
1525 of the extreme fitness videos about people running 100 miles,
1526 it is not inherently harmful, but if we show them too much --
1527 the experts are telling us that we should disperse them more,
1528 and make sure that they are not seen too regularly --

1529 *Ms. Matsui. So you are very intentional --

1530 *Mr. Chew. -- especially by younger users.

1531 *Ms. Matsui. -- about that, then. It is something that
1532 you are --

1533 *Mr. Chew. We are working on it, yes, yes.

1534 *Ms. Matsui. You are working on it?

1535 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

1536 *Ms. Matsui. Okay, I yield back.

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1537 *The Chair. The gentlelady yields back. The chair
1538 recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Bilirakis, for
1539 five minutes.

1540 *Mr. Bilirakis. Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate
1541 it very much. Thanks for holding this hearing.

1542 Mr. Chew, your algorithms have prioritized providing
1543 harmful content directly to children, like self-harm
1544 challenges and even suicide. Just three days ago, Italy
1545 opened an investigation into the TikTok over user safety
1546 concerns after the so-called French Scar Challenge went viral
1547 on your platform.

1548 I know you know about the Blackout Challenge, which
1549 others may know as the Choking Challenge that encourages
1550 children to bring them to the point of unconsciousness or, in
1551 some cases, tragically, death. If that isn't enough, I want
1552 to share the story of Chase Nasca, a 16-year-old boy from New
1553 York who tragically ended his life a year ago by stepping in
1554 front of a train.

1555 I want to thank his parents again. They are here. I
1556 want to thank his parents for being here today, and allowing
1557 us to show this.

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

1558 Mr. Chew, your company destroyed their lives. Your
1559 company destroyed their lives. I admire their courage to be
1560 here and share Chase's story in the hopes that it will
1561 prevent this from happening to other families. The content
1562 in Chase's For You page was not a window to discovery, as you
1563 boldly claimed in your testimony. It wasn't content from a
1564 creator that you invited to roam the Hill today, or STEM
1565 education content that children in China see. Instead, his
1566 For You page was, sadly, a window to discover suicide. It is
1567 unacceptable, sir, that, even after knowing all these
1568 dangers, you still claim TikTok is something grand to behold.

1569 I want you to see what Chase would see. And I think if
1570 you want -- again, would you share this content with your
1571 children, with your two children? Would you want them to see
1572 this?

1573 And again, I want to warn everyone watching that you may
1574 find this content disturbing, but we need to watch this,
1575 please.

1576 [Video shown.]

1577 *Mr. Bilirakis. Mr. Chew, please, your technology is
1578 literally leading to death. Mr. Chew, yes or no, do you have

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1579 full responsibility for your algorithms used by TikTok to
1580 prioritize content to its users? Yes or no, please.

1581 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I would just like to --
1582 respectfully, if you don't mind, I would just like to start
1583 by saying it is devastating to hear about the news of --

1584 *Mr. Bilirakis. Yes, yes.

1585 *Mr. Chew. As a father myself, this is tragic.

1586 *Mr. Bilirakis. Sir, yes or no. I will repeat the
1587 question. Do you have full responsibility over the
1588 algorithms used by TikTok to prioritize content to its users?
1589 Yes or no, please.

1590 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, we do take these issues very
1591 seriously.

1592 *Mr. Bilirakis. Yes or no?

1593 *Mr. Chew. And we do provide resources for anyone who
1594 types in anything that --

1595 *Mr. Bilirakis. Sir, yes or no.

1596 I see you are not willing to answer the question or take
1597 any responsibility for your parent companies, the technology,
1598 and the harms it creates. It is just very, very sad. Very
1599 sad.

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

1600 *Mr. Chew. It is very sad. I --

1601 *Mr. Bilirakis. This is why Congress needs to enact a
1602 comprehensive privacy and data security law to give Americans
1603 more control over their information, and to protect our
1604 children. We must save our children from Big Tech companies
1605 like yours, who continue to abuse and manipulate them for
1606 your own gain.

1607 And I will yield back, Madam Chair.

1608 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
1609 recognizes the lady from Florida, Ms. Castor, for five
1610 minutes.

1611 *Ms. Castor. Well, thank you, Madam Chair.

1612 Colleagues, it is urgent that the Congress pass an
1613 online data privacy law that protects the personal privacy of
1614 Americans online, and particularly our kids. While this
1615 hearing shines a light on TikTok, this hearing also should
1616 serve as a call to action for the Congress to act now to
1617 protect Americans from surveillance, tracking, personal data
1618 gathering, and addictive algorithmic operations that serve up
1619 harmful content and has a corrosive effect on our kids'
1620 mental and physical well-being.

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

1621 For many years I have sounded the alarm in this
1622 committee of how Big Tech platforms like TikTok and Facebook
1623 and Instagram incessantly surveil, track, gather personal
1624 private information, and use it along with data brokers to
1625 target and influence our behavior. This is a much broader
1626 issue than TikTok in China. There are other malign actors
1627 across the world who gather data to use it as an element of
1628 social control, and influence peddling, and worse.

1629 And as I detailed in this committee last year when we
1630 passed the -- our online privacy law, the harms to children
1631 are very serious, and demand swift action. Big Tech
1632 platforms profit immensely from keeping children addicted.
1633 They do not care about the privacy, safety, and health of our
1634 kids. They are the modern-day tobacco and cigarette
1635 companies that for so long resisted and misled Congress. And
1636 it took the Congress -- it took action by the Congress to
1637 actually protect our kids, and to outlaw smoking by young
1638 people.

1639 In early 2020, based upon the growing body of evidence
1640 to harm of -- to kids online, I introduced the Kids Privacy
1641 Act and the KIDS Act. And I want to thank all of the

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1642 researchers, the young people, the parents, the surgeon
1643 general of the United States, who have explained the
1644 correlation between social media usage and body
1645 dissatisfaction, disordered eating habits, anxiety,
1646 depression, self-injury, suicide ideation, and cyber-
1647 bullying.

1648 Heck, Frances Haugen, the Facebook whistleblower, was
1649 right here and testified to us that Facebook and Instagram
1650 conducted research on this topic. They knew and understood
1651 the harms, but they continued to elevate profits over the
1652 well-being of children. And TikTok does the same.

1653 Last Congress, when we passed the ADPPA, the committee
1654 incorporated many of these important child online privacy and
1655 safety provisions from my bills. But we can make the 118th
1656 Congress's version of this bill, of this new law, even more
1657 protective of children. And I look forward to working with
1658 the chair and the ranking member to make that happen.

1659 Mr. Chew, TikTok has incredible sway over children in
1660 the U.S., but you don't have a very good track record. In
1661 2019 TikTok was hit with the largest civil penalty by the
1662 Federal Trade Commission in a children's privacy case. Four

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1663 years later, TikTok still has not taken sufficient action to
1664 fix the problems, I assume, because child users are
1665 incredibly profitable to your bottom line.

1666 So answer me this: TikTok allows advertisers to
1667 specifically target advertising to children aged 13 to 17,
1668 correct?

1669 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, I do want to disagree with
1670 the statement --

1671 *Ms. Castor. Yes or no?

1672 *Mr. Chew. -- that child abuses are not allowed on our
1673 platform.

1674 *Ms. Castor. Just yes or no.

1675 *Mr. Chew. It is deplorable conduct, and it is not
1676 allowed on our platform.

1677 *Ms. Castor. Do you target advertising to young people
1678 aged 13 to 17?

1679 *Mr. Chew. We do serve personalized advertising --

1680 *Ms. Castor. Okay, thank you.

1681 *Mr. Chew. -- at this point, but the policies are very
1682 safe for them.

1683 *Ms. Castor. How much money does TikTok make off

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1684 selling ads targeted to minors?

1685 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, can I clarify? Minors in
1686 what age?

1687 *Ms. Castor. From just say age 13 to 17.

1688 *Mr. Chew. For the teenager population, I want to
1689 clarify that. We do have a 13 -- under 13 experience, and
1690 with zero advertising on that platform. For those --

1691 *Ms. Castor. Well, that is a whole other topic. Okay.

1692 *Mr. Chew. Between 13 and 17, if you don't mind, I will
1693 check in with my team and get back to you on those answers.

1694 *Ms. Castor. You know, TikTok could be designed to
1695 minimize the harm to kids, but a decision was made to
1696 aggressively addict kids in the name of profits. And it is
1697 our responsibility, Members, to act swiftly to address this.
1698 This has gone on for too long. We have dilly-dallied too
1699 much. This committee, thankfully, we have taken
1700 responsibility and enacted, but we have an enormous
1701 responsibility to act swiftly, and get this bill to the floor
1702 of the House, and passed into law as soon as possible.

1703 Thank you. I yield back my time.

1704 *The Chair. The gentlelady yields back. The chair

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

1705 recognizes the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Johnson, for five
1706 minutes.

1707 *Mr. Johnson. Thank you, Madam Chair.

1708 Mr. Chew, I am an information technology professional.
1709 I have been doing it for the most of my life. You have been
1710 evasive in many of your answers. I am going to talk to you
1711 in some language that maybe you will better understand, ones
1712 and zeros. Okay?

1713 Let's talk about the Citizen Lab Report. This is
1714 something your team frequently mentions in hearings as a way
1715 to exonerate yourself. For example, in the limitations
1716 section it reads, "We could not examine every source code
1717 component and test in the apps in every circumstance, which
1718 means our methods could not find every security issue,
1719 privacy violation, and censorship event. So it is an
1720 incomplete assessment.'" The report notes that TikTok's data
1721 collection using third-party trackers was in apparent
1722 conflict with the GDPR, and that multiple themes were
1723 censored by TikTok.

1724 What is shocking to me is the shared source code between
1725 TikTok in the United States and the CCP-centered Douyin. The

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1726 Citizen Labs Report says that many of the functions and
1727 classes were identical, and that the differences in behavior
1728 between TikTok in the United States and Douyin in China are
1729 slight changes in hard-coded values. Incredibly, specific
1730 censorship parameters from Douyin are present in TikTok, but
1731 just turned off. The authors say that, for unknown reasons,
1732 the parameter variable itself is preserved.

1733 So while Citizen Labs may have been afraid to say the
1734 obvious conclusion, Mr. Chew, I am not. TikTok's source code
1735 is riddled with backdoors and CCP censorship devices. Here
1736 is the truth: in a million lines of code, the smallest shift
1737 from a zero to a one on just one of thousands of versions of
1738 TikTok on the market will unlock explicit CCP censorship and
1739 access to American data.

1740 Mr. Chew, as CEO of TikTok, why have you not directed
1741 your engineers to change the source code?

1742 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, thank you for the question.

1743 I --

1744 *Mr. Johnson. Have you directed them to change the
1745 source code?

1746 *Mr. Chew. Like what we are offering --

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1747 *Mr. Johnson. Yes or no, have you directed them to
1748 change that source code?

1749 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, if you give me a bit of time to
1750 just --

1751 *Mr. Johnson. No, I don't -- it is a yes or no
1752 question. Have you directed your engineers to change that
1753 source code?

1754 *Mr. Chew. I am not sure I understand.

1755 *Mr. Johnson. Why are you allowing TikTok to continue
1756 to have the capacity for censorship, and yet you claim here
1757 that you don't?

1758 *Mr. Chew. It doesn't --

1759 *Mr. Johnson. Let me remind you of something. Do you
1760 realize that making false and misleading statements to
1761 Congress is a Federal crime?

1762 *Mr. Chew. Yes, I do.

1763 *Mr. Johnson. Okay. So have you directed your
1764 engineers to change that source code?

1765 *Mr. Chew. I am giving third-party access monitoring by
1766 experts.

1767 *Mr. Johnson. Okay.

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1768 *Mr. Chew. And Congressmen, you are an expert on
1769 this --

1770 *Mr. Johnson. What percentage --

1771 *Mr. Chew. -- you could agree with me that no other
1772 company does this --

1773 *Mr. Johnson. What percentage of TikTok source code is
1774 the same as Douyin, what percentage?

1775 *Mr. Chew. I can get back to you on the specifics.

1776 *Mr. Johnson. Okay, I would appreciate that.

1777 Where was the source code for TikTok developed? Was it
1778 developed in China or in the United States?

1779 *Mr. Chew. It is a global collaborative effort, like a
1780 lot of --

1781 *Mr. Johnson. And was it developed in --

1782 *Mr. Chew. -- codes in a lot of countries.

1783 *Mr. Johnson. Was it developed in China? Some of it?

1784 *Mr. Chew. Some of it is.

1785 *Mr. Johnson. Okay. And ByteDance.

1786 Can the -- when it is compiled in the compilation
1787 process, can byte code be manipulated? We have talked a lot
1788 about source code. What about the byte code, the ones and

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1789 zeros that actually execute on the device?

1790 *Mr. Chew. That is --

1791 *Mr. Johnson. Can it be manipulated?

1792 *Mr. Chew. Congressman?

1793 *Mr. Johnson. Yes.

1794 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, to give you comfort, that is
1795 why we are giving third-party monitors.

1796 *Mr. Johnson. As --

1797 *Mr. Chew. As an expert, I think you can agree that
1798 very few companies do this --

1799 *Mr. Johnson. I have got the report here by Citizen
1800 Lab. I want to read you something from Ron Deibert.
1801 Specifically in your written testimony to Congress you stated
1802 on page nine, "Citizen Lab found that there was no overt data
1803 transmission by TikTok to the Chinese Government, and that
1804 TikTok did not contact any servers within China." You
1805 implied that Citizen Lab exonerated TikTok from any
1806 information-sharing with China.

1807 Well, the director of Citizen Lab saw this, and issued a
1808 statement correcting the record yesterday. And I am quoting
1809 Ron Deibert, the director of the lab: "I am disappointed

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1810 that TikTok executives continue citing the Citizen Lab's
1811 research in their statements to government as somehow
1812 exculpatory. I have called them out on this in the past, and
1813 it is unfortunate that I have to do it again.'`

1814 He goes on to say, and I quote, "We even speculated
1815 about possible mechanisms through which the Chinese
1816 Government might use unconventional techniques to obtain
1817 TikTok user data via pressure on ByteDance.'`

1818 Mr. Chew, you sent Congress written testimony citing
1819 this lab as a support of your claim that China cannot access
1820 user data, U.S. user data. And now this lab has come out to
1821 say, "We never said that, that is misleading.'` Mr. Chew, I
1822 hope you understand what that is. That is misleading. Mr.
1823 Chew, this is yet another instance of TikTok attempting to
1824 mislead Americans about what their technology is capable of,
1825 and who has access to their information.

1826 Madam Chair, I would like to --

1827 *Mr. Chew. Madam Chair, I would like to respond to that
1828 very quickly, please.

1829 *Mr. Johnson. -- enter this statement by Ron Deibert
1830 and the Citizens Lab into the record.

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

1831 *The Chair. Without objection, so ordered.

1832 [The information follows:]

1833

1834 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

1835

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1836 *Mr. Johnson. With that I yield back.

1837 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
1838 yields to the gentleman from Maryland, Mr. Sarbanes. Five
1839 minutes.

1840 *Mr. Sarbanes. Thanks very much, Madam Chair.

1841 Mr. Chew, I am going to pick up on a theme we have
1842 already covered here, which is the effect that your platform,
1843 along with many other social media platforms, by the way, has
1844 in terms of mental and behavioral health in this country. I
1845 won't speak to what is happening elsewhere in the world, but
1846 we have talked about the impact that it is having on
1847 children, on teens.

1848 We took some action last year in this committee to try
1849 to improve access to resources, reauthorize critical programs
1850 to address mental health needs. But we need to do even more
1851 than that. And we have got to address what the Big Tech
1852 companies like TikTok are doing, because those are platforms
1853 that expose children and teens to additional risks.

1854 The more time that middle and high schoolers spend on
1855 social media, the evidence is, the more likely they are to
1856 experience depression and anxiety. And this is particularly

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1857 troubling since, apparently, 16 percent of American teenagers
1858 report that they use TikTok "almost constantly." That is, I
1859 think, about five million teenagers in this country that are
1860 on TikTok all the time.

1861 And we know that Big Tech, including TikTok, uses design
1862 features that can manipulate users, including children and
1863 teens, to keep them engaged, designed to feed them a never-
1864 ending stream of content, keep their attention for hours on
1865 end, which includes capitalizing on the desire for others'
1866 approval through "like" features, preying on the fear of
1867 missing out through push notifications, and so forth.

1868 Again, you are part of an industry that is set up to do
1869 this. You, in some sense, don't appear to be able to help
1870 yourselves in reaching out and finding that new user and then
1871 holding onto them. TikTok itself has acknowledged that these
1872 features and others, like the Endless Scroll feature, can
1873 have an outsized effect on teens, and we have been discussing
1874 today how your app only intensifies that harm by amplifying
1875 dangerous content and misinformation.

1876 I don't want to be too paternalistic here, because we
1877 have young people in the audience. We have got TikTok users

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1878 that are watching this hearing, and I am sure they have their
1879 own ideas about how this technology is being managed by
1880 TikTok and other social media platforms. They like to access
1881 the platforms, and they should be able to do that safely. So
1882 it is certainly in their interest, and they can drive this
1883 conversation, I think, perfectly well.

1884 But it is not a fair fight, is it? I mean, the
1885 algorithms are on one side of the screen. The human brain is
1886 on the other side of the screen, drowning in these
1887 algorithms, in many instances, at an age where the brain is
1888 not even fully developed yet. So those addictive impulses
1889 are being sort of perfected by the technology. And again, it
1890 leaves the users sort of helpless in the face of that.

1891 Are you looking at ways to redesign core features like
1892 the ones I mentioned to be less manipulative and addictive
1893 for users, and can you commit to making some of those
1894 modifications here today?

1895 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, thank you. We do want to be
1896 leading in terms of safety of our users, particularly for
1897 teenagers. We were the first to launch a 60-minute watch
1898 limit.

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1899 *Mr. Sarbanes. Yes, let's talk about the 60-minute
1900 watch limit.

1901 *Mr. Chew. And I am very glad to see people, others in
1902 our industry, follow.

1903 For many of your recommendations, we will study them
1904 very seriously. We actually have a series of features.
1905 Like, for example, if you are under 16 you cannot use a
1906 direct messaging feature because, you know, we want to
1907 protect those younger users. If you are under 16, you cannot
1908 go viral by default. If you are under 18, you cannot go
1909 live. And --

1910 *Mr. Sarbanes. Let me go back to the 60-minute limit,
1911 because my understanding is that teens can pretty easily
1912 bypass the notification to continue using the app if they
1913 want to.

1914 I mean, let's face it, our teens are smarter than we are
1915 by half, and they know how to use the technology, and they
1916 can get around these limits if they want to. Are you
1917 measuring how many teens continue to exceed the 60 minutes of
1918 time on that app?

1919 *Mr. Chew. We understand --

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1920 *Mr. Sarbanes. -- how that is working?

1921 *Mr. Chew. We understand those concerns. What we --
1922 our intention is to have the teens and their parents have
1923 these conversations about what is the appropriate amount of
1924 time for social media. That is why we give the parents what
1925 we call Family Pairing --

1926 *Mr. Sarbanes. Let me ask you this question before I
1927 run out of time. If you concluded that putting some
1928 reasonable limits in place and trying to find a way to
1929 enforce them would lead some percentage of your users to
1930 leave TikTok and go somewhere else, is that something that
1931 you are prepared to accept?

1932 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

1933 *Mr. Sarbanes. Really? Well, I would love to get the
1934 research on how these limits are being implemented, how they
1935 are being bypassed, and the things that you are taking -- the
1936 measures you are taking to address those issues going
1937 forward. Please bring that information back to our committee
1938 as we move forward.

1939 *Mr. Chew. I will be happy to.

1940 *Mr. Sarbanes. I yield back.

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1941 *The Chair. The gentleman yields. The chair recognizes
1942 the gentleman from Kentucky, Mr. Guthrie, for five minutes.

1943 *Mr. Guthrie. Thank you, Madam Chair, for yielding. I
1944 appreciate the time.

1945 Mr. Chew, your terms of service specifically state that
1946 TikTok does -- and I quote -- "not allow the depiction,
1947 promotion, or trade of drugs or other controlled
1948 substances.'" Despite this content being against your terms
1949 of service -- and I have brought this up with other service
1950 providers -- but despite this content being against your
1951 terms of service, content on your platform related to illicit
1952 drugs like fentanyl, drug trafficking, and other illicit
1953 activity is pervasive, and racks up hundreds of thousands of
1954 views.

1955 For example, in 2020 the Benadryl Challenge resulted in
1956 the death of an American teenager. And we heard of another
1957 one, a challenge earlier today that brought a death of a
1958 teenager.

1959 While you were at ByteDance, you were the CFO for
1960 ByteDance, did Douyin allow related illicit drug trafficking
1961 or challenges resulting in death or injury to kids?

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

1962 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I represent TikTok here today.

1963 I can tell you that TikTok does not allow illegal drugs --

1964 *Mr. Guthrie. Does Douyin --

1965 *Mr. Chew. -- on our platform.

1966 *Mr. Guthrie. Does Douyin do it in China?

1967 *Mr. Chew. I believe they don't allow this, but I will
1968 need to check. I don't run that business.

1969 *Mr. Guthrie. So my question is --

1970 *Mr. Chew. I can tell you TikTok does not allow this.

1971 *Mr. Guthrie. Because all we are concerned about -- and
1972 my guess -- and would Douyin allow for 41 days a threat
1973 against a member of the Chinese Communist Party to stand on
1974 their site for 41 days?

1975 *Mr. Chew. Again, I cannot speak for Douyin and, I am
1976 sorry, I didn't hear the second part of what you said.

1977 *Mr. Guthrie. Well, we had a threat against the
1978 chairman of our committee that was on your site for 41 days.
1979 My guess is that would not be allowed in China.

1980 *Mr. Chew. That content is violative. I would look
1981 into the specifics, and I would -- if it violates our
1982 guidelines, it will be taken down on TikTok.

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1983 *Mr. Guthrie. Yes, surely.

1984 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

1985 *Mr. Guthrie. It appears that it does. But the problem
1986 is that -- what I am trying to get at is you seem to be able
1987 to prevent this content in China, but you -- so not even
1988 taking it down, just prevent it from being posted. And yet
1989 it is all -- it is on your website.

1990 So I have a couple of questions about -- you said
1991 earlier as soon as you find this information, you take it
1992 down. So how quickly does your algorithm detect keywords or
1993 content that involve illicit drug trafficking before these
1994 posts are self-reported or used by others?

1995 *Mr. Chew. We have about 40,000 people working on this
1996 now, together with the machines that we train. I don't think
1997 any company in our industry can be perfect at this. This is
1998 a real big challenge for our industry, but our goal is to get
1999 this -- any violative content, including illegal drugs, down
2000 to a very, very small number.

2001 *Mr. Guthrie. That is the problem. When we have these
2002 hearings we have CEOs of different companies, and of your
2003 colleagues and competitors. And we always hear apologies,

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2004 and we always hear, "We want to do better at this," but it
2005 just doesn't seem to keep improving. And we are hearing
2006 stories of our children and, obviously, that has been talked
2007 about today.

2008 So how many posts and accounts have been identified and
2009 removed from TikTok due to content posts posted related to
2010 illicit drugs or other controlled substances?

2011 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, we do publish that in a
2012 transparency report. I can get my team to get the
2013 information to yours.

2014 *Mr. Guthrie. Thank you. I appreciate that.

2015 Also, we understand that the way that people use TikTok
2016 or other platforms similar to yours is that they ensure
2017 flagged user content isn't permitted to jump from -- so my
2018 question -- so what we have heard is that the instances --
2019 the users see a drug advertisement, and then give a code to
2020 go to another site. So my question is, do you work with
2021 other platforms to ensure flagged user content isn't
2022 permitted to jump from one platform to others?

2023 *Mr. Chew. I will check with my team. I would love to
2024 work with our industry to make sure that we stamp out these

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2025 problems. You know, violative content should not be allowed
2026 on any platforms, in my opinion.

2027 *Mr. Guthrie. Well, this is what is, you know, kind of
2028 frustrating to all of us here, is that we look at what is
2029 happening on your sites and others, and particularly that --
2030 we know, because we have done the research, that you can't
2031 have access to illicit drug information on Douyin, which is a
2032 sister company, as you say, in China. And so it absolutely -
2033 - if you can prevent it on one and not the other, you
2034 obviously have the ability to stop it from moving forward,
2035 and yet you don't.

2036 Would you like to expand how one of your sister
2037 companies can prevent that, and you not -- I know you don't
2038 represent Douyin, but they don't allow it. But it happens on
2039 your platform. What is the difference?

2040 *Mr. Chew. First of all, the majority of the content on
2041 TikTok is fun, entertaining, informative, and very positive
2042 for our users. Like other companies that operate in this
2043 country, we have to deal with some bad actors who come and
2044 publish some content on illegal drugs, you know, other --

2045 *Mr. Guthrie. But the bad actors don't seem to be able

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2046 to access Douyin.

2047 *Mr. Chew. The TikTok U.S. experience should be
2048 compared to other U.S. companies, because this is a common --

2049 *Mr. Guthrie. But your parent company has the
2050 technology to prevent it, because you prevent it in China,
2051 but you can't prevent it here. What is the difference? That
2052 is what I am asking.

2053 *Mr. Chew. Oh, Congressman, there is no technology that
2054 is perfect in doing this. We have to deal with the reality
2055 of the country that you are operating in. And here in the
2056 United States, as with other companies, we share this
2057 challenge. We are investing a lot to address the challenge.
2058 But we are -- you know, it is a shared challenge --

2059 *Mr. Guthrie. But you invest a lot to -- seem to be
2060 able to address it in China, but not here.

2061 *Mr. Chew. Again, you know, I think the comparison has
2062 to be within the single country. You know, we face the same
2063 set of challenges here in the U.S. --

2064 *Mr. Guthrie. What is the difference -- oh, I am sorry,
2065 I am out of time. But what is the difference in China and
2066 here?

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2067 *Mr. Chew. Let me give you an example, Congressman. In
2068 my home country, Singapore, there is almost no illegal drug
2069 content because Singapore has very strict drug laws.

2070 *Mr. Guthrie. Thank you.

2071 My time is expired, and I yield back.

2072 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
2073 recognizes the gentleman from New York, Mr. Tonko, for five
2074 minutes.

2075 *Mr. Tonko. Thank you, Madam Chair. I am concerned
2076 that TikTok's algorithm prize -- preys on vulnerable people,
2077 including those struggling with addiction, eating disorders --
2078 disorders, and other mental health conditions. The platform
2079 is designed to push content to users that will watch more
2080 frequently and for longer periods of time.

2081 Unfortunately for many people suffering from certain
2082 mental health disorders, videos that reinforce their fears or
2083 negative self image are more engaging. On top of that,
2084 TikTok has received sensitive patient health information and
2085 records of browsing activity from multiple telehealth
2086 companies like BetterHelp and Cerebral.

2087 People's personal struggles should not be fuel for

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2088 TikTok's profits. People should be able to seek help to
2089 address serious medical concerns without being afraid that
2090 their information will be shared with social media companies
2091 trying to push more products, services, or content at them.

2092 So Mr. Chew, will TikTok continue to get information
2093 from third parties on its users' health, including their
2094 mental health? Yes or no.

2095 *Mr. Chew. We will continue to work with experts --
2096 yes, if that is the question -- to identify these issues.

2097 *Mr. Tonko. Will you continue to get information from
2098 these third parties, including their mental health? Yes or
2099 no.

2100 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I am sorry. I may not
2101 understand your question. If your question is if I am
2102 working with them on these issues, the answer is yes.

2103 *Mr. Tonko. It is not the question. It is will you
2104 continue to get information from these third parties on its
2105 users' health.

2106 *Mr. Chew. Get information? We do not get any user
2107 health information from third parties, Congressman.

2108 *Mr. Tonko. You have talked a lot about user privacy

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2109 and safety. Will you commit here today to no longer using
2110 data about users' health, particularly their mental health,
2111 to push them content or sell ads? Yes or no.

2112 *Mr. Chew. We take our users' mental health very
2113 seriously. We --

2114 *Mr. Tonko. Yes or no?

2115 *Mr. Chew. As far as I am aware, we don't do that,
2116 Congressman. It is not what --

2117 *Mr. Tonko. So the answer is no, you will no longer use
2118 data about users' health.

2119 TikTok systematically exploits users' anxieties by
2120 pushing alarming and distressing content onto their For You
2121 page. For example, in May of 2022 the LA Times found that
2122 some pregnant users searching for information about their
2123 pregnancies on TikTok were then shown information about
2124 miscarriages, stillbirths, and delivery room traumas.

2125 Your company knows that distressing content can have the
2126 perverse effect of feeding user engagement. And for TikTok,
2127 engagement means money. In the course of a week, what
2128 percentage of content that a user sees is considered
2129 potentially harmful or distressing content?

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2130 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, we work with a lot of experts
2131 on this. Even before we set the 60-minute time limit for
2132 under 18s, if you spend too much time on our platform -- you
2133 can try it. If you spend too much time, we will actually
2134 send you videos to tell you to go out and get some air and
2135 get off the platform.

2136 *Mr. Tonko. What percentage of content that a user sees
2137 is considered potentially harmful?

2138 *Mr. Chew. I would need to follow up with my team and
2139 get back to you on that, if that is okay.

2140 *Mr. Tonko. Well, a ballpark.

2141 *Mr. Chew. I would need to follow up with my team.

2142 *Mr. Tonko. So are teenagers in particular shown more
2143 distressing content?

2144 *Mr. Chew. The opposite is true. We actually put in
2145 more restrictions to make sure that our teenagers get a
2146 better experience, you know --

2147 *Mr. Tonko. Are expecting or new parents showing more
2148 distressing content?

2149 *Mr. Chew. I know of many parents, including one I met
2150 recently, who actually used our platform to find communities

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2151 to connect with other parents and learn a lot more. I have
2152 heard amazing stories of creators who have difficulties, you
2153 know --

2154 *Mr. Tonko. Reclaiming my time, are individuals with
2155 eating disorders shown more distressing content?

2156 *Mr. Chew. We do not -- we remove all content that
2157 glorifies eating disorders, and we have worked with experts
2158 to look at certain inherently -- certain content that may not
2159 inherently be harmful, like diet trends, and make sure that
2160 we disperse them more throughout our algorithm.

2161 *Mr. Tonko. What about those with mental health issues,
2162 are they given --

2163 *Mr. Chew. This is an issue --

2164 *Mr. Tonko. -- more distressing content?

2165 *Mr. Chew. If a user searches, you know, words that
2166 expresses mental health issues, we actually redirect them to
2167 a safety page. Like, for example, if you -- I don't know if
2168 I should say this in public -- if you search, "I want to
2169 die," we will redirect you to a safety page, for example.

2170 *Mr. Tonko. So what about those suffering from
2171 addiction? Are they given more distressing content?

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2172 *Mr. Chew. I am sorry, Congressman, I missed that
2173 question.

2174 *Mr. Tonko. Those suffering from addiction, are they
2175 given more distressing content?

2176 *Mr. Chew. I missed the first few words, I apologize.

2177 *Mr. Tonko. What about those suffering from addiction?
2178 Are they given more distressing content?

2179 *Mr. Chew. Oh, those suffering from --

2180 *Mr. Tonko. Addiction.

2181 *Mr. Chew. Addiction? Do you mean drug addiction or --

2182 *Mr. Tonko. Yes, or any order of addiction.

2183 *Mr. Chew. If people search for content -- and you can
2184 try it on a variety of subjects -- we will actually direct
2185 you to a safety page to give you more resources.

2186 And a lot of recovering addicts have actually found
2187 communities on TikTok. And it has really helped them, you
2188 know, find the voices and the community and the courage to
2189 really overcome their addiction. I personally have heard
2190 stories of that.

2191 *Mr. Tonko. Well, I appreciate your answers, but I was
2192 looking for yes or no, and we did not get those. And again,

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

2193 I think the more that they watch this distressing content,
2194 the more profit TikTok makes. And that is distressing.

2195 I yield back.

2196 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
2197 recognizes the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. Walberg, for five
2198 minutes.

2199 *Mr. Walberg. Thank you, Madam Chair.

2200 And we are glad that you are here, Mr. Chew. As Chair
2201 Rodgers and Representative Burgess mentioned this morning,
2202 the Wall Street Journal reported that China will firmly
2203 oppose any forced sale or divestiture of TikTok. And this is
2204 based not on conjecture, but it is based on comments provided
2205 by the official spokesperson at the Ministry of Commerce, who
2206 said that any TikTok sale or spinoff would amount to a
2207 technology export, and would have to adhere to Chinese law
2208 and approval. This spokesperson was quoted as saying the
2209 Chinese -- and I quote -- "The Chinese Government will make
2210 decisions according to the law." The Chinese Government.

2211 Mr. Chew, do you agree with this official? Yes or no.

2212 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I cannot speak on behalf of a
2213 Chinese Government official.

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2214 *Mr. Walberg. Do you agree with that official?

2215 *Mr. Chew. We will need to look at this, because
2216 Project Texas is designed to move forward here in the United
2217 States, and we are not discussing this. So I don't have
2218 specifics.

2219 *Mr. Walberg. You know, your company is valued at
2220 upwards of \$50 billion, and has been on the verge of forced
2221 sale or ban for three years, at least, correct?

2222 Do you expect this committee to believe you haven't
2223 already discussed this scenario with your team?

2224 And you should have an answer to this, yes or no, I
2225 agree with the Communist Party or I don't agree with the
2226 Communist Party.

2227 So I guess I would say at that point you disagree with
2228 the Communist Party. Explain your discrepancy.

2229 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, for two years we spent a
2230 billion-and-a-half U.S. dollars to build Project Texas. This
2231 is after very extensive discussions with relevant folks --

2232 *Mr. Walberg. Project Texas is just something expanded
2233 for the future. We are talking about now. We are talking
2234 about what you are doing now, what your expectations are now,

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2235 what your relationship is with the Communist Party, which is
2236 our major concern of what the impact that will be with a
2237 country -- let me rephrase that -- with the Communist Party
2238 that doesn't care about America, and sees us as standing in
2239 their way for super power. That is our concern.

2240 And for you to have direct relationship, direct
2241 ownership with ByteDance, and to not have a characterization
2242 or an agreement or disagreement that you say -- explicitly
2243 with this party policy, it is hard for us to believe what you
2244 are saying.

2245 Let me move on. Following up on what Mr. Latta asked
2246 about data access by Chinese engineers, in responding to Mr.
2247 Latta you talked about where American user data would be
2248 stored in the future. But the question was about access
2249 today. Storage in the future versus access today. This is
2250 total redirection. This blows up any trust we could desire
2251 to develop.

2252 So to be clear, Mr. Chew, today do ByteDance employees
2253 in Beijing have access to American data?

2254 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, we have been very open about
2255 this. We have relied on global interoperability --

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2256 *Mr. Walberg. You have access to American data.

2257 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I am answering your question,
2258 if you give me just a bit of time. We rely on global
2259 interoperability, and we have employees in China. So, yes,
2260 the Chinese engineers do have access to global data.

2261 *Mr. Walberg. They have access to global data.

2262 *Mr. Chew. We have heard.

2263 *Mr. Walberg. Not storage.

2264 *Mr. Chew. No, storage has always been in Virginia and
2265 Singapore. The physical servers --

2266 *Mr. Walberg. You have no access to storage, to
2267 American data today.

2268 *Mr. Chew. That is not what I said. I said --

2269 *Mr. Walberg. So you do have access to American data,
2270 and you have storage of American data.

2271 *Mr. Chew. The American data has always been stored in
2272 Virginia and Singapore in the past, and access of this is on
2273 an as-required basis --

2274 *Mr. Walberg. As required of who?

2275 *Mr. Chew. By engineers for business purposes.

2276 *Mr. Walberg. By engineers.

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2277 *Mr. Chew. This is a private --

2278 *Mr. Walberg. ByteDance?

2279 *Mr. Chew. ByteDance --

2280 *Mr. Walberg. The Communist Party.

2281 *Mr. Chew. No, no.

2282 *Mr. Walberg. How can you say that --

2283 *Mr. Chew. This is a --

2284 *Mr. Walberg. -- if they have access?

2285 *Mr. Chew. This is a private business. And like many
2286 other businesses, many other American companies, we rely on a
2287 global workforce.

2288 *Mr. Walberg. So the global workforce that includes
2289 ByteDance, which is connected directly to the Chinese
2290 Communist Party, has access --

2291 *Mr. Chew. That is a characterization that we disagree
2292 with.

2293 Now, in the future --

2294 *Mr. Walberg. That is not what we can disagree with.
2295 That is a fact.

2296 *Mr. Chew. It is not, unfortunately.

2297 *Mr. Walberg. The CEO of ByteDance and your

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2298 relationship to them --

2299 *Mr. Chew. It is not -- Congressman, respectfully, in
2300 my opening statement I said this is a private company. It is
2301 owned 60 percent by global investors. Three out of the five
2302 board members of ByteDance are Americans. This is a private
2303 business.

2304 *Mr. Walberg. And you report directly to ByteDance,
2305 with a CEO who is a member of the Communist Party. Let me
2306 move on.

2307 *Mr. Chew. He is not.

2308 *Mr. Walberg. I think we got the answer, sadly, at this
2309 point.

2310 I believe my time is expired, so I yield back.

2311 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
2312 recognizes Ms. Clarke for five minutes.

2313 *Ms. Clarke. Thank you, Chairwoman Rodgers, thank the
2314 Ranking Member Pallone for holding today's hearing.

2315 Throughout this hearing -- I also want to thank our
2316 witness for being here to testify on what are very important
2317 issues before us today.

2318 Throughout this hearing my colleagues have outlined the

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2319 potential threat posed by the security of Americans' data by
2320 TikTok being affiliated -- and some would say owned -- by a
2321 Chinese company, foreign adversaries having direct access to
2322 Americans' data, as well as the ability to influence this
2323 content Americans see on a prolific social media platform
2324 represents an unprecedented threat to American security and
2325 to our democracy. However, the problems of social media
2326 platforms' content moderation, algorithmic discrimination,
2327 and safety are neither new nor unique to TikTok.

2328 Mr. Chew, I share the concerns raised by my colleague,
2329 Congresswoman Matsui, related to algorithms. I believe that
2330 without mitigation against bias, platforms will continue to
2331 replicate, exacerbate discrimination that is illegal under
2332 civil rights law, as well as exclude important dialogue about
2333 sensitive topics like race from occurring on the platform.
2334 For example, I was disturbed by reports that TikTok content
2335 moderation algorithm flagged words like Black or Black Lives
2336 Matter as inappropriate content.

2337 So my first question, Mr. Chew, is do you agree that
2338 platforms like TikTok should be subject to regular audits or
2339 transparency requirements to identify whether policies have a

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2340 disparate impact on communities that are protected classes
2341 like race, religion, national origin, or gender?

2342 *Mr. Chew. I think, Congresswoman, I think platforms
2343 should be very transparent on what they do there, and
2344 disclose a lot of information. We can get back on the
2345 specifics of what we mean by an audit.

2346 But I do agree very strongly that platforms should be
2347 very transparent, and it is a commitment that we are giving
2348 to this committee and all our users that our platform will be
2349 a place for freedom of expression. We embrace all diverse
2350 points of view, all ethnic minorities. You can come and say
2351 whatever you want, as long as you don't violate the rules of
2352 safety that were put in place.

2353 And we will -- we also commit to be free of all and any
2354 government manipulation. So I think I am in strong agreement
2355 with a lot of what you said.

2356 *Ms. Clarke. Well, thank you. My bill, the Algorithmic
2357 Accountability Act, would require platforms to be transparent
2358 about their algorithms, measure disparate impact, and require
2359 risk mitigation. It is vital that the diverse culture of the
2360 United States is reflected online.

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2361 But I am concerned the algorithms and content moderation
2362 practices employed by TikTok are ignorant to the fundamental
2363 diversity, while also failing to remove content that is
2364 harmful, like child sexual abuse material, hate speech, or
2365 domestic terrorism content.

2366 My next question to you is it is my understanding that
2367 users must be in good standing to be eligible for
2368 compensation from TikTok's Creator Fund. For example, they
2369 can't have violated community guidelines. Is this correct?

2370 *Mr. Chew. There are some details there, but
2371 directionally, yes.

2372 *Ms. Clarke. If TikTok's algorithm is flagging content
2373 incorrectly, resulting in creators violating community
2374 guidelines when in fact they have not, those creators would
2375 not be eligible to receive compensation under the Creator
2376 Fund, correct?

2377 *Mr. Chew. We do have an appeals process.

2378 *Ms. Clarke. You have an appeals process. Okay.

2379 *Mr. Chew. Yes --

2380 *Ms. Clarke. In my view, if TikTok employs algorithms
2381 that disproportionately misremove content from Black

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2382 creators, it disproportionately silences and excludes Black
2383 creators from compensation opportunities. And this problem
2384 happens in parallel to the lack of adequate recognition,
2385 attribution, and compensation to Black creators for their
2386 content.

2387 The exploitation, cultural misappropriations, the
2388 erasure of Black creatives' ownership of their fashion, art,
2389 and media is nothing new. We need transparency,
2390 accountability, and bold action to mitigate against
2391 misinformation, bias, and exclusion of certain communities
2392 from the opportunities present on platforms like TikTok.

2393 So let me just say this. I am concerned about
2394 transparency. I am concerned about algorithmic
2395 accountability. And I am not clear that your organization
2396 holds those values. So I want to ask that you take a look at
2397 this, because this is all part and parcel of what we are
2398 concerned about with respect to social media platforms and
2399 the misappropriation, the ways in which those algorithms can
2400 discriminate within the context of the social media platform.

2401 With that, Madam Chair, I yield back.

2402 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, is it okay if I just very

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2403 quickly respond? This is a very important topic.

2404 *The Chair. Unfortunately, we only have 4.5 hours with
2405 you, and I am going to try to get to every member. So we are
2406 going to keep going.

2407 *Mr. Chew. It is very important. I would love to
2408 follow up.

2409 *The Chair. Well, there will be other opportunities.
2410 The lady yields back. The gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Buddy
2411 Carter, is recognized for five minutes.

2412 *Mr. Carter. Thank you, Madam Chair.

2413 Mr. Chew, welcome to the most bipartisan committee in
2414 Congress. We may not always agree on how to get there, but
2415 we care about our national security, we care about our
2416 economy, and we sure as heck care about our children. We
2417 sure do.

2418 And that is why you are here today, because two-thirds
2419 of all the youth in our country are on your app. They spend
2420 an average of 95 minutes on your app. And, you know,
2421 research has shown that TikTok is the most addictive platform
2422 out there. And the reason for that is, we have been told, is
2423 because it has the most advanced algorithm. And the Chinese

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2424 Communist Party knows this. And I don't speak for everyone,
2425 but there are those on this committee, including myself, who
2426 believe that the Chinese Communist Party is engaged in
2427 psychological warfare through TikTok to deliberately
2428 influence U.S. children.

2429 [Slide]

2430 *Mr. Carter. You know, you see behind me, if you look
2431 behind me, Mr. Chew, you see some of the challenges that we
2432 have seen on TikTok. You know about them. You know about
2433 the Milk Crate, you know about the about the Blackout
2434 Challenge, you know about the NyQuil Chicken Challenge, the
2435 Benadryl Challenge, the Dragon's Breath Liquid Nitrogen
2436 Trend, or the challenge that promotes car theft.

2437 I want to ask you. As I understand it, there is a
2438 sister app in China, Douyin -- I am sorry if I am butchering
2439 the pronunciation. Do they have these same things over
2440 there? Do they have these kind of challenges in China?

2441 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I am really glad you asked this
2442 question.

2443 *Mr. Carter. Do they, yes or no?

2444 *Mr. Chew. I am not sure, because --

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2445 *Mr. Carter. Whoa, whoa, whoa, come on, now. You are
2446 not sure?

2447 *Mr. Chew. I really am not sure.

2448 *Mr. Carter. Remember, you took -- the chairlady, she
2449 said you got to tell the truth, okay? Do you know whether
2450 they have these kind of challenges like this over in China?
2451 Because it is my understanding they don't.

2452 *Mr. Chew. I am not sure, because I spend my energies
2453 running TikTok.

2454 *Mr. Carter. And you don't look at any of your other
2455 competitors, or look at anything similar to yours. So you
2456 don't know whether they have -- they don't have this over in
2457 China.

2458 *Mr. Chew. I did --

2459 *Mr. Carter. We have it here, but they don't have it
2460 here. And that is why I am asking you this. Why is it that
2461 TikTok consistently fails to identify and moderate these
2462 kinds of harmful videos?

2463 *Mr. Chew. Did --

2464 *Mr. Carter. Why is it? Why is it that you allow this
2465 to go on?

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

2466 We have already heard, God bless you, from parents who
2467 are here with us who have lost children. I submit to you
2468 everybody up here cares about the children of this country.
2469 Tell me, tell me why.

2470 *Mr. Chew. This is a real industry challenge, and we
2471 are working very hard --

2472 *Mr. Carter. No, no, no. It is not industry. This is
2473 TikTok.

2474 *Mr. Chew. It is --

2475 *Mr. Carter. We are talking about TikTok. We are
2476 talking about why is it that you can't control this?

2477 And although I believe in giving credit where credit is
2478 due, I want to thank you. It is my understanding that the
2479 video that threatened the life of the chairwoman has been
2480 removed. Thank you for doing that. Sorry we had to bring it
2481 to your attention here, but it has been removed.

2482 Tell me why this goes on.

2483 *Mr. Chew. This is an industry challenge for all of us
2484 here, operating in this industry.

2485 *Mr. Carter. Okay. So much for industry challenge. I
2486 want to shift gears real quick.

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

2487 I want to talk about biometric matrix, and I want to
2488 talk specifically -- can you tell me right now, can you say
2489 with 100 percent certainty that TikTok does not use the
2490 phone's camera to determine whether the content that elicits
2491 a pupil dilation should be amplified by the algorithm? Can
2492 you tell me that?

2493 *Mr. Chew. We do not collect body, face, or voice data
2494 to identify our users. We do not. The only --

2495 *Mr. Carter. You don't?

2496 *Mr. Chew. No. The only face data that you will get
2497 that we collect is when you use the filters to have, say,
2498 sunglasses on your face. We need to know where your eyes
2499 are.

2500 *Mr. Carter. Why do you need to know where the eyes
2501 are, if you are not seeing if they are dilated?

2502 *Mr. Chew. And that data is stored on your local
2503 device, and deleted after use if you use it for facial.
2504 Again, we do not collect body, face, or voice data to
2505 identify our users.

2506 *Mr. Carter. I find that hard to believe. It is our
2507 understanding that they are looking at the eyes.

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2508 How do you determine what age they are, then?

2509 *Mr. Chew. We rely on age gating as our key age
2510 assurance --

2511 *Mr. Carter. Age --

2512 *Mr. Chew. Gating, which is when you ask the user what
2513 age they are.

2514 We have also developed some tools, where we look at
2515 their public profile to go through the videos that they post
2516 to see whether --

2517 *Mr. Carter. Boy, that is creepy. Tell me more about
2518 that.

2519 *Mr. Chew. It is public. So if you post a video that
2520 is -- you choose that video to go public, that is how you get
2521 people to see your video. We look at those to see if you --
2522 it matches up the age that you talked about.

2523 Now, this is a real challenge for our industry, because
2524 privacy versus age assurance is a really big problem.

2525 *Mr. Carter. Look, look, you keep talking about the
2526 industry. We are talking about TikTok here. We are talking
2527 about children dying. Do you know how many children have
2528 died because of this? Do you have any idea? Can you tell

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2529 me?

2530 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, again, it is heartbreaking.

2531 *Mr. Carter. Can you tell me if --

2532 *Mr. Chew. It is heartbreaking.

2533 *Mr. Carter. How many children in America have died
2534 because of challenges like this?

2535 *Mr. Chew. The majority of people who use our platform
2536 use it for positive experiences. There are --

2537 *Mr. Carter. That is not what I asked you.

2538 *Mr. Chew. There are some --

2539 *Mr. Carter. I asked you, tell me the number of
2540 children, of U.S. children who have died because of these
2541 challenges.

2542 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, again, the majority of people
2543 who come on our platform get a good experience --

2544 *Mr. Carter. I am not talking about the majority of
2545 children. I want to know a number.

2546 *Mr. Chew. Dangerous [inaudible] are not allowed on our
2547 platform. If we find them, we will remove them. We take
2548 this very seriously.

2549 *Mr. Carter. Obviously, you found one today and you

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

2550 removed it. We had to bring it to your attention.

2551 And I know I am out of time. Thank you for being here.

2552 Welcome again to the most bipartisan committee in Congress.

2553 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. We will now
2554 take a brief recess, and resume in 10 minutes. The committee
2555 stands in recess.

2556 [Recess.]

2557 *The Chair. The chair recognizes the gentleman from
2558 California, Mr. Cardenas, for five minutes -- Cardenas,
2559 sorry.

2560 *Mr. Cardenas. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. I
2561 appreciate this opportunity for this committee to have this
2562 important hearing regarding TikTok and its effect on the
2563 American people, especially the American children, and the
2564 potential effect -- not potential, but the effects that it
2565 has had, and may have in the future when it comes to our
2566 democracy and misinformation and disinformation that
2567 permeates on TikTok.

2568 It is unfortunate that I think most Americans -- or most
2569 parents -- think that TikTok is this innocent little thing
2570 where kids get on there, and they do a little dance or

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2571 something like that. But TikTok is much, much more, as some
2572 of my colleagues -- and I thank them for bringing up some of
2573 these serious issues, literally life and death issues that
2574 TikTok is right in the middle of.

2575 And also, what I would like the witness to acknowledge
2576 is that it appears that Ms. Cammack, my colleague, brought up
2577 those two posters, and since then TikTok has taken them down.
2578 Since then, not before then. Are you aware of that, Mr.
2579 Chew?

2580 *Mr. Chew. I was briefed during the break that they are
2581 taken down, Congressman.

2582 *Mr. Cardenas. Okay. How do you feel about the fact
2583 that they were -- it was up for apparently 40-some days, 41
2584 days, and yet in the middle of this hearing it was brought
2585 directly to your attention. And as a result, it has been
2586 taken down so quickly.

2587 *Mr. Chew. It goes to show the enormous challenge that
2588 we have to make sure that, although the vast majority of our
2589 users come for a good experience, we need to make sure that
2590 bad actors don't pose violative content.

2591 *Mr. Cardenas. Yes. And the way, Mr. Chew, that you

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2592 can make sure is that you can make sure that you choose to
2593 invest more resources, more money into more ability to pull
2594 down damaging and deadly information from your platform. Are
2595 you investing more and more and more every day into bringing
2596 down that kind of content? That is my question. Are you?

2597 *Mr. Chew. Yes. And I have committed to investing more
2598 in this regard to stay on top of the growth.

2599 *Mr. Cardenas. Right here in the United States, many,
2600 many languages are used and spoken. For example, TikTok in
2601 the United States is being used in many languages.
2602 Specifically when it comes to Spanish language, are you
2603 dedicating more resources today than you did months ago,
2604 years ago, on making sure that you are combing through that
2605 content to make sure that, if content is dangerous or
2606 damaging or deadly, that you are bringing it down as quickly
2607 as possible?

2608 *Mr. Chew. Yes, we are investing in more Spanish
2609 language content moderation. And yes, we will -- once we
2610 identify --

2611 *Mr. Cardenas. Okay.

2612 *Mr. Chew. -- violative content, we will take it down

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2613 as soon as possible.

2614 *Mr. Cardenas. Thank you. And your testimony today
2615 isn't the only opportunity for you to commit to answering
2616 questions to this committee. So I would like you to forward
2617 to this committee -- again, I am not asking for trade
2618 secrets, but I would like to get some semblance of
2619 understanding as to how much you are investing with the
2620 number of bodies, the number of people, the number of
2621 resources in making sure that you are investing more in
2622 pulling down content that is either deadly or dangerous on
2623 your platform. Can you forward that to the committee?

2624 *Mr. Chew. I will check with my team and get back to
2625 you on this, Congressman.

2626 *Mr. Cardenas. Thank you very much. I appreciate that
2627 opportunity.

2628 As was mentioned earlier, it might sound a little funny,
2629 but you have in fact been one of the few people to unite this
2630 committee -- members Republicans and Democrats -- to be in
2631 agreement that we are frustrated with TikTok. We are upset
2632 with TikTok. And yes, you keep mentioning that there are
2633 industry issues that not only TikTok faces, but others. You

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2634 remind me a lot of Mike Zuckerberg. He -- when he came here,
2635 I said to my staff, "He reminds me of Fred Astaire, a good
2636 dancer with words," and you are doing the same today. A lot
2637 of your answers are a bit nebulous. They are not yes or no.

2638 So I would like to ask you a question. Yes or no, is
2639 your revenue going up at TikTok month over month or year over
2640 year?

2641 *Mr. Chew. Yes, our revenue is going up year over year.

2642 *Mr. Cardenas. Okay. And with that, some of the
2643 answers I would like you to forward this committee is are you
2644 investing more and more money into making sure that content
2645 that is dangerous and/or deadly, you are investing more and
2646 more resources in that aspect of your expenditures and your
2647 commitment to your users and to your organization?

2648 *Mr. Chew. Yes, I commit to that, and we will -- we are
2649 investing more, and we will continue to do that.

2650 *Mr. Cardenas. Okay. My last question is this: Are
2651 you a Chinese company?

2652 *Mr. Chew. TikTok is a company that is now
2653 headquartered in Singapore and Los Angeles.

2654 *Mr. Cardenas. Okay.

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2655 *Mr. Chew. We are not available in mainland China. Our
2656 users are in other countries around the world.

2657 *Mr. Cardenas. Okay. Is there a corporation that has
2658 any authority above TikTok?

2659 *Mr. Chew. TikTok is a subsidiary of ByteDance, which
2660 is founded by a Chinese founder.

2661 *Mr. Cardenas. And ByteDance is a Chinese company?

2662 *Mr. Chew. Well, ByteDance owns many businesses that
2663 operates in China.

2664 *Mr. Cardenas. Is it or is it not a Chinese company?

2665 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, the way we look at it, it was
2666 founded by Chinese entrepreneurs --

2667 *Mr. Cardenas. No, no, no, no, I am not asking you how
2668 you look at it. Fact. Is it a Chinese company or not?

2669 For example, Dell is a company. It is an American
2670 company. They have activities all over the world.

2671 Is it a Chinese company?

2672 *Mr. Chew. I frequently have this discussion with
2673 others on what is a company that is now global.

2674 *Mr. Cardenas. That is okay. I prefer you answer the
2675 question and stop dancing verbally on it.

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2676 Madam Chair, my time is expired. Thank you very much.

2677 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
2678 recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Obernolte.

2679 *Mr. Obernolte. Well, thank you very much.

2680 Mr. Chew, it is nice to see you again. If I could just
2681 bring us back up to 30,000 feet for a second, I just want to
2682 talk about what we are afraid of here. You know, what we
2683 fear might happen.

2684 Social media companies -- and TikTok is unique in this
2685 -- is not unique in this -- gather a tremendous amount of
2686 user data, and then use powerful AI tools to use that data to
2687 make eerily accurate predictions of human behavior, and then
2688 seek to manipulate that behavior. And that is something that
2689 it is not just TikTok, it is all our social media companies
2690 that are doing this.

2691 Ultimately, the solution is to enact comprehensive
2692 Federal data privacy legislation that will prevent that kind
2693 of behavior, or at least allow users to consent to it. And
2694 that is, I know, something that the chair is working on, the
2695 ranking member. I hope that this committee will act on that
2696 this year.

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2697 The specific concern here, though, as regards TikTok, is
2698 that this type of capability falling into the hands of
2699 foreign countries is something that has national security
2700 implications. And that is why Congress is getting involved
2701 on this issue. So I know that you have proposed Project
2702 Texas in an effort to alleviate these fears. So I wanted to
2703 ask some specific technical questions about Project Texas,
2704 and the way that you believe that it will solve this problem.

2705 So one of the things that you have said in your
2706 testimony is that part of Project Texas will have engineers
2707 at Oracle going through the source code for TikTok. How
2708 large is that code base?

2709 *Mr. Chew. Well, it is not small, but it is not just
2710 Oracle, Congressman. We are also inviting other third-party
2711 monitors. We are in the process of figuring out who the
2712 best --

2713 *Mr. Obernolte. Sure. So we are talking -- are we
2714 talking millions, tens of millions of lines of code? How big
2715 is the base?

2716 *Mr. Chew. It is significant, but it is something that
2717 we believe can be done. And again, I want to say that I

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2718 don't -- I have not heard of an another company, American or
2719 not allowed for this to happen.

2720 *Mr. Obernolte. I mean, you are kind of at a unique
2721 position, having to answer these concerns of Congress.

2722 So are they going through the code for just the app, or
2723 the app and the server code?

2724 *Mr. Chew. I can get back to you on the --

2725 *Mr. Obernolte. Okay.

2726 *Mr. Chew. -- on the technical details.

2727 *Mr. Obernolte. Well --

2728 *Mr. Chew. But it is comprehensive, including the
2729 software that powers the -- a lot of the software that powers
2730 the experience.

2731 *Mr. Obernolte. And how long will that review take?

2732 *Mr. Chew. I need to get back to you on the timeline,
2733 but we are progressing quite well on Project Texas, and
2734 whenever we hit a milestone I commit to be very transparent
2735 about it.

2736 *Mr. Obernolte. Okay. So I am wondering, because I am
2737 also concerned, as a software engineer, about the process in
2738 which new code is introduced into the code base. Do you use

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2739 a software configuration management system at TikTok?

2740 *Mr. Chew. The way we plan for new code to be done is
2741 that, even before the code becomes live, it has to be
2742 reviewed. The changes have to be reviewed by the --

2743 *Mr. Obernolte. Okay, so you are talking about --

2744 *Mr. Chew. -- third-party monitor.

2745 *Mr. Obernolte. -- a code review. That was good. That
2746 was another question I had for you. So the code review, is
2747 it done with a team of engineers or just with a single
2748 engineer?

2749 *Mr. Chew. Oh, it is going to be a team effort.

2750 *Mr. Obernolte. Okay.

2751 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

2752 *Mr. Obernolte. And that is going to be done at Oracle
2753 or elsewhere?

2754 *Mr. Chew. It is going to be done in one of our
2755 transparency centers, so that we -- you know, we still need
2756 to make sure that the code itself is secure, and, you know,
2757 so --

2758 *Mr. Obernolte. Okay, so --

2759 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

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2760 *Mr. Obernolte. What I am hearing you say is that, even
2761 though the code might be written by someone not in the United
2762 States, before the code is integrated it will be reviewed in
2763 a code review by a team of engineers within the United
2764 States?

2765 *Mr. Chew. That is the plan.

2766 *Mr. Obernolte. Okay. And the back to the question
2767 about the software configuration management system, how do
2768 you manage the integration of that code change into the rest
2769 of the TikTok code base?

2770 *Mr. Chew. The long and short of it is we have built a
2771 team of American personnel with security credentials. The
2772 person who leads the team used to work for the Secret --

2773 *Mr. Obernolte. No, no, I understand, but, I mean,
2774 there is a software solution for integrating those code
2775 changes into the code base. What solution is that?

2776 *Mr. Chew. I would need to check --

2777 *Mr. Obernolte. Is it a commercial one?

2778 *Mr. Chew. -- and get back to you on the details.

2779 *Mr. Obernolte. Okay.

2780 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

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2781 *Mr. Obernolte. Well, specifically, what I would like
2782 to know is to make sure that this isn't something that TikTok
2783 has created custom, which many companies do, because that
2784 would mean that you would have to review the source code for
2785 that, as well --

2786 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

2787 *Mr. Obernolte. -- for security.

2788 How do you protect against threats like the -- a
2789 malicious actor being hired not by TikTok, but by Oracle, for
2790 example, or by USDS?

2791 *Mr. Chew. The approach that most companies take for
2792 these things is to have several layers of monitoring to make
2793 sure that everything that somebody has reviewed, there is a
2794 secondary review so that one malicious actor is not able to
2795 create the damage that the malicious actor can do.

2796 But you rightly pointed out these kind of problems are
2797 industry-wide problems.

2798 *Mr. Obernolte. Right.

2799 *Mr. Chew. Every company has to deal with them.

2800 *Mr. Obernolte. Okay. Well, let me ask a specific
2801 question about that. I mean, I -- in thinking about -- if I

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2802 were a malicious actor, a software engineer on one of your
2803 projects, how I would go about writing a malicious code, I
2804 wouldn't put it right there and say, hey, I am malicious. I
2805 would put unrelated lines of code in different sections of
2806 the code that work together to do something malicious. How
2807 do you think that that could get caught?

2808 *Mr. Chew. Again, you know, we have to rely on third-
2809 party experts to help us with that. I think there are enough
2810 experts who can catch a lot of these things. The work on
2811 security globally, on all data security, is never perfect.

2812 *Mr. Obernolte. Yes, I understand.

2813 *Mr. Chew. But we can have a lot of oversight to keep
2814 it safer than any other experience.

2815 *Mr. Obernolte. I appreciate the effort. My concern,
2816 Mr. Chew, is I don't believe that it is technically possible
2817 to accomplish what TikTok says it will accomplish through
2818 Project Texas. I just think that there are too many
2819 backdoors through that process to allow that to be possible,
2820 and I think a malicious actor would succeed in inserting
2821 malicious code in there if they wanted to. But I hope we --
2822 I see we are out of time. I hope we get an opportunity to

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2823 talk some more about this.

2824 I yield back, Madam Chair.

2825 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
2826 recognizes the gentlelady from Michigan, Mrs. Dingell, for
2827 five minutes.

2828 *Mrs. Dingell. Thank you, Chairman Rodgers and Ranking
2829 Member Pallone, for holding this hearing, and to Mr. Chew for
2830 testifying here today. Your good news: you are halfway
2831 through with me.

2832 As screen time increases, so do inherent risks. And
2833 with the proliferation and popularity of new social media
2834 platforms, so does the potential reach of dangerous,
2835 provocative, and often harmful content and, my fear, the
2836 abuse of collected data.

2837 As a representative from the State of Michigan, I can
2838 speak from experience on how social media has been used to
2839 target members of the Michigan delegation, including a plot
2840 to kidnap our governor, and how it can be weaponized to
2841 perpetuate harms towards individuals and communities, and you
2842 saw firsthand how it targeted the chair of this committee.

2843 Today many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle

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2844 have raised legitimate concerns about protecting children
2845 online, misinformation, and securing our data, concerns that
2846 I share and -- has been said by many of my colleagues are
2847 bipartisanly shared. I think, in many ways, these myriad of
2848 issues highlight the need for comprehensive data privacy
2849 legislation that would ensure the safety and integrity of
2850 every American's data on every social media platform and
2851 mitigate potential harms.

2852 One important area of concern I have regarding data
2853 collection is geolocation data and how it can be abused. I
2854 have seen it abused. I have seen women die because it has
2855 been abused. This subject has dangerous implications for
2856 survivors of domestic violence, people seeking medical care,
2857 and protecting children from potential predators.

2858 Mr. Chew, in your testimony you wrote that current
2859 versions of the app do not collect precise or approximate GPS
2860 information from U.S. users. Yes or no answers, please. Mr.
2861 Chew, have any prior versions of TikTok's app collected
2862 precise GPS information from U.S. users? Yes or no.

2863 *Mr. Chew. Yes, from back in 2020, about 3 years ago.

2864 *Mrs. Dingell. Are there currently TikTok users who

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2865 still hold old versions of the app that collect precise GPS
2866 information from U.S. users? Yes or no.

2867 *Mr. Chew. There could be, but that is a small
2868 percentage today.

2869 *Mrs. Dingell. Still dangerous. Has TikTok at any time
2870 fed precise GPS information collected from U.S. users into
2871 algorithms to serve user ads? Yes or no.

2872 *Mr. Chew. I will need to check on the details, because
2873 we do not currently collect that. So I need to check on the
2874 details.

2875 *Mrs. Dingell. Yes, I am sure there is a yes, there.
2876 But has TikTok at any time fed precise GPS information
2877 collected from U.S. users into algorithms -- I am having --
2878 talk today -- to make inferences about users? Yes or no.

2879 *Mr. Chew. I am not sure of the specifics. I --

2880 *Mrs. Dingell. I would like answers, yes or no, after
2881 this. Has TikTok at any time sold precise GPS information
2882 collected from U.S. users? Yes or no.

2883 *Mr. Chew. We do not sell data to data brokers, if that
2884 is the question.

2885 *Mrs. Dingell. That -- and you have never done that?

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2886 *Mr. Chew. I do not believe so.

2887 *Mrs. Dingell. Has TikTok at any time sold or shared
2888 with third parties algorithmic inferences that were made
2889 using, in part or in whole, precise GPS information collected
2890 from U.S. users, yes or no?

2891 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I need to check on these
2892 specifics. What I can tell you is right now we do not
2893 collect precise GPS location data in the United States.

2894 *Mrs. Dingell. All right. Does TikTok still use
2895 inferences that were made using, in part or in whole, precise
2896 GPS information collected from U.S. users?

2897 *Mr. Chew. I am sorry. Would you repeat that?

2898 *Mrs. Dingell. Does TikTok still use inferences that
2899 you have gained that were made using, in part in -- or whole,
2900 precise GPS information collected from U.S. users in your
2901 algorithms?

2902 *Mr. Chew. That will be a very technical question. I
2903 would have to check and get back to you.

2904 *Mrs. Dingell. Has TikTok at any time provided the
2905 Chinese Government with either precise GSP [sic] information
2906 collected from U.S. users or inferences made from that data?

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2907 *Mr. Chew. That I can give you a straight -- no.

2908 *Mrs. Dingell. Mr. Chew, even in Congress -- even if
2909 Congress were to ban TikTok, I am concerned that China or
2910 others would still have access to U.S. consumer data by
2911 purchasing it through data brokers. Will you commit not to
2912 sell any of TikTok's data to data brokers now or in the
2913 future?

2914 *Mr. Chew. We do not do that. We do not sell data to
2915 data brokers now.

2916 *Mrs. Dingell. Will you commit to not do it in the
2917 future?

2918 *Mr. Chew. This is a -- there are certain members of
2919 our industry who do this. You know, I think this has to be
2920 broad legislation to help us, the whole industry, address
2921 this problem.

2922 *Mrs. Dingell. I think I am out of time.

2923 Thank you, Madam Chair. I will yield back.

2924 *The Chair. The gentlelady yields back. The chair
2925 yields five minutes to the gentleman from Alabama, Mr.
2926 Palmer.

2927 *Mr. Palmer. Thank you.

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2928 When the Chinese communist government bought a share of
2929 ByteDance, it has been described as the Chinese communist
2930 government's way of quieter form of control. And the
2931 companies have little choice in selling a stake to the
2932 government if they want to stay in business.

2933 And what I would like to know is when the Chinese
2934 communist government moved to buy shares of ByteDance, were
2935 you informed beforehand? Yes or no.

2936 *Mr. Chew. No. Congressman --

2937 *Mr. Palmer. Okay.

2938 *Mr. Chew. ByteDance --

2939 *Mr. Palmer. Were --

2940 *Mr. Chew. -- hasn't --

2941 *Mr. Palmer. Were you or anyone with TikTok asked for
2942 your opinion about the sale of shares of ByteDance to the
2943 Chinese communist government? Yes or no.

2944 *Mr. Chew. It just -- this hasn't happened.

2945 *Mr. Palmer. Did you or anyone employed by or
2946 affiliated with TikTok state any objections or concerns about
2947 the possibility of the Chinese communist government, once
2948 they had shares in ByteDance, exercising control over

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2949 content, using your platform for conducting misinformation
2950 campaigns, or restrictions ensuring nothing is posted that
2951 reflects badly on the Chinese Communist government, or for
2952 surveillance and data collection for use against anyone?

2953 Did any of your -- you or anyone affiliated with TikTok
2954 raise any concerns about that?

2955 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, we do not collect -- we do not
2956 promote --

2957 *Mr. Palmer. I didn't ask you that.

2958 *Mr. Chew. We do not promote --

2959 *Mr. Palmer. Yes or no, did you raise any concerns
2960 about it? Because that is why we are here.

2961 *Mr. Chew. But we do not promote or remove any content
2962 on --

2963 *Mr. Palmer. I didn't ask you that.

2964 *Mr. Chew. -- the behalf of the Chinese Government.

2965 *Mr. Palmer. Did you communicate in any form or fashion
2966 with the directors of ByteDance that there might be concerns
2967 about government control over content? Yes or no, did -- you
2968 either did or you didn't.

2969 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I --

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2970 *Mr. Palmer. You didn't.

2971 *Mr. Chew. I just want to make this clear. We do not
2972 remove --

2973 *Mr. Palmer. Let me ask you this.

2974 *Mr. Chew. -- or promote content at the request of the
2975 Chinese Government.

2976 *Mr. Palmer. TikTok insiders have already said that the
2977 company is tightly controlled by ByteDance. It even gets
2978 down to the hours they work. So obviously, you didn't say
2979 anything. There is a serious concern by Chinese companies,
2980 privately-held companies, about doing anything against what
2981 the Chinese communist government wants.

2982 I want to ask you this. Does TikTok screen against
2983 manipulative content from child predators? Yes or no.

2984 *Mr. Chew. Do we screen against --

2985 *Mr. Palmer. Do you screen against them --

2986 *Mr. Chew. Yes, we do this --

2987 *Mr. Palmer. How about --

2988 *Mr. Chew. -- child predator --

2989 *Mr. Palmer. How about drug cartels?

2990 *Mr. Chew. Drug cartels, child predatory content, this

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2991 is all violative --

2992 *Mr. Palmer. You had a drug cartel that was engaged in
2993 a police chase with Spanish authorities, and they posted it
2994 on TikTok, and got over a million views. Why wasn't that
2995 taken down? And are you doing it with human traffickers or
2996 terrorists?

2997 I mean, do you withhold content from nations that might
2998 be committing crimes against humanity? Yes or no.

2999 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, our platform is a place of --

3000 *Mr. Palmer. Yes or no?

3001 *Mr. Chew. -- freedom of expression. And users come
3002 here, and --

3003 *Mr. Palmer. Yes or no? I know, you talk about that.
3004 But yes or no, do you screen against content from nations
3005 that commit crimes against humanity?

3006 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, our users come and --

3007 *Mr. Palmer. Yes or no?

3008 *Mr. Chew. Our users come and --

3009 *Mr. Palmer. Yes or no?

3010 *Mr. Chew. -- present any points of views that they
3011 want, and --

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3012 *Mr. Palmer. You don't.

3013 *Mr. Chew. And it is a commitment to keep this free
3014 from --

3015 *Mr. Palmer. Let me ask you this. Michael Beckerman,
3016 who is your vice president and head of public policy for the
3017 Americas, right? Is he part of the team that helped you
3018 prepare for this meeting? Yes or no.

3019 *Mr. Chew. Can I clarify who you mean?

3020 *Mr. Palmer. Michael Beckerman?

3021 *Mr. Chew. Yes, he is.

3022 *Mr. Palmer. Okay. Where is he at this moment?

3023 *Mr. Chew. I am sorry?

3024 *Mr. Palmer. Where is Mr. Beckerman at this moment?

3025 *Mr. Chew. He is probably here.

3026 *Mr. Palmer. No, you know he is here. He is sitting
3027 right behind you. I want to know why, when Mr. Beckerman was
3028 on with Jake Tapper on CNN and asked repeatedly to condemn
3029 Chinese communist government's treatment of the Uyghurs when
3030 that treatment has been classified by the United States as a
3031 genocide, when a UN report classifies it as a crime against
3032 humanity, why after multiple questions Mr. Beckerman refused

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3033 to address that. Are you afraid of the Chinese communist
3034 government?

3035 *Mr. Chew. No, because you --

3036 *Mr. Palmer. Are you concerned that --

3037 *Mr. Chew. -- can find that content on our platform.
3038 Any content that our users want to express their views on
3039 this issue --

3040 *Mr. Palmer. Well, why couldn't your --

3041 *Mr. Chew. -- is freely available on our platform.

3042 *Mr. Palmer. -- vice president of public policy, the
3043 guy who is head of public policy for the Americas, and an
3044 American on an American television news channel, why couldn't
3045 he say -- why couldn't he condemn that?

3046 *Mr. Chew. I think it is very important to look at our
3047 platform. And if you use our -- and open our app, and search
3048 for any content --

3049 *Mr. Palmer. I am not talking about your platform. I
3050 am asking about your personnel now, because personnel is
3051 policy. Everybody in this room understands that, except
3052 maybe you. Personnel is -- let me just conclude with this.
3053 And I hate to bring this up, because I -- this is part of the

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3054 stuff that I have studied. But deception is fundamental to
3055 the Chinese Communist Party's political intelligence and
3056 military strategy. And you have repeatedly used the word
3057 "transparency" throughout this hearing. And every time you
3058 have said it, what I have heard is deception.

3059 And I yield back.

3060 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
3061 recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Veasey, for five
3062 minutes.

3063 *Mr. Veasey. Thank you, Madam Chair. I got to tell
3064 you, Mr. Chew, as a father of a 16-year-old that likes social
3065 media, the -- a lot of your evasiveness today in answering
3066 many of these questions really disturbs me, because I can
3067 tell you that the teenagers of today, they really don't want
3068 to be on Facebook. They want your platform. And you were
3069 asked to come before this committee to testify about many
3070 things, and a lot of us are worried about our kids' personal
3071 data.

3072 As the co-chair of the Congressional Voting Rights
3073 Caucus, I also worry that TikTok is the world's most powerful
3074 and extensive propaganda machine, allowing the Chinese

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3075 Communist Party to use TikTok's platform to influence public
3076 opinion and undermine the integrity of our democratic
3077 elections.

3078 And I have a report called "TikTok and Facebook Failed
3079 to Detect Election Disinformation in the U.S., While YouTube
3080 Succeeds.'" And this report was published by the non-profit
3081 Global Witness, and the Cybersecurity for Democracy Team at
3082 NYU. And the purpose of the study was to test platforms like
3083 TikTok and whether or not they can detect and take down false
3084 political ads targeted at U.S. voters, young voters, ahead of
3085 last year's midterm elections. And according to this report,
3086 90 percent of election disinformation ads tested were
3087 approved by your platform.

3088 Again, that is 90 percent of ads containing false and
3089 misleading election misinformation went undetected on TikTok.
3090 And just to add some color to the type of misleading ads that
3091 were approved by TikTok, this included ads that were live on
3092 TikTok that said the wrong election day, and actually
3093 encouraged people to vote twice.

3094 You do know that voting twice is a felony. Mr. Chew,
3095 you do know that it is illegal to vote twice.

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3096 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, any misinformation that comes
3097 around a political action --

3098 *Mr. Veasey. Okay.

3099 *Mr. Chew. -- is something we take very seriously.

3100 *Mr. Veasey. Let me -- I am particularly troubled about
3101 this type of information, because it can run rampant on
3102 TikTok. And given that TikTok -- again, you all are
3103 appealing to a very young and diverse user base. That is
3104 exactly the people that we have seen targeted time and time
3105 again with voter suppression campaigns run by malicious
3106 actors.

3107 Mr. Chew, do you agree with me that it is completely
3108 unacceptable that 90 percent of these ads were undetected on
3109 your platform?

3110 And can you detail for us right now TikTok's policy
3111 regarding election misinformation and paid political ads, and
3112 how the company monitors such information, and how you plan
3113 to get that number down to zero?

3114 *Mr. Chew. Well, TikTok is a place for our users to
3115 come and express their points of views freely. We do take
3116 misinformation, dangerous misinformation particularly around

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3117 an election, very seriously. And we will work with third-
3118 party experts to identify misinformation --

3119 *Mr. Veasey. Do you call allowing 90 percent of false
3120 content, political content on your platform to be taken --
3121 you call that -- you define that as being taken seriously?

3122 *Mr. Chew. I need to look into the specifics. I am,
3123 you know, not sure where the number came from, but I can tell
3124 you, Congressman, that we are the only platform that I know
3125 of that doesn't actually take political ads. We don't accept
3126 money. I don't think other platforms can say that.

3127 *Mr. Veasey. Mr. Chew, can you detail how you responded
3128 to that report? Did you respond to that report that I just
3129 mentioned?

3130 *Mr. Chew. I need to look at the specifics of the
3131 report, Congressman, and I can get back to you on that.

3132 *Mr. Veasey. All right, Mr. Chew, I want to shift to
3133 Project Texas.

3134 I know that we have discussed this initiative throughout
3135 today's hearing, but I want to dive deeper into your notion
3136 that promises about Project Texas should give us any
3137 confidence in TikTok's ability to localize U.S. data and

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3138 discontinue access to that data to ByteDance employees in
3139 China. Why? Because we have already had a TikTok executive
3140 appear before Congress and give sworn testimony about the
3141 comfort that we should take in TikTok's U.S.-based resources.
3142 Well, TikTok data security practices were being scrutinized
3143 by the U.S. Government -- and unfortunately, we have since
3144 found out from a -- from journalists and recorded
3145 conversations that those assurances were worthless.

3146 In your testimony you also mentioned that Oracle has
3147 already begun inspecting TikTok's source code, and has access
3148 to the platform's recommendation algorithm. Why should this
3149 give the American public any great assurances, particularly
3150 given that Oracle now owns a stake in TikTok and stands to
3151 gain monetarily, the more revenue that TikTok and its
3152 algorithm generates?

3153 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, not only is Project Texas
3154 unprecedented in our industry in protecting U.S. user data
3155 and interests, we are inviting third parties to come in and
3156 monitor this. And we will, you know, be transparent in that
3157 process. And this is more -- beyond most -- all companies
3158 that I know of in my industry --

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3159 *Mr. Veasey. Thank you, Madam Chair. I am out of time.

3160 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
3161 recognizes the gentleman from Florida for five minutes, Mr.
3162 Dunn.

3163 *Mr. Dunn. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

3164 Mr. Chew, I am aware that on arriving in D.C. this week
3165 you appeared on TikTok and boasted you had 150 million U.S.
3166 users, 5 million U.S. businesses. That represents a lot of
3167 data. You also referenced your appearance before this
3168 committee as a chance to share all that TikTok is doing to
3169 protect Americans using the app.

3170 Mr. Chew, has ByteDance spied on Americans at the
3171 direction of the Chinese Communist Party?

3172 *Mr. Chew. No.

3173 *Mr. Dunn. Madam Chair, I would like to enter into the
3174 record this October 2022 Forbes article entitled, "TikTok
3175 Parent ByteDance Plan to Use TikTok to Monitor the Physical
3176 Location of Specific U.S. Citizens.'`

3177 *The Chair. Without objection, so ordered.

3178 [The information follows:]

3179

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3180 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

3181

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

3182 *Mr. Dunn. Thank you. The project assigned this to a
3183 Beijing-led team, and they were going to follow individual
3184 American citizens.

3185 I ask you again, Mr. Chew, has ByteDance spied on
3186 American citizens?

3187 *Mr. Chew. I don't think that spying is the right way
3188 to describe it. This is ultimately --

3189 *Mr. Dunn. We can differ on that.

3190 *Mr. Chew. This is, ultimately, an internal
3191 investigation --

3192 *Mr. Dunn. Any TikTok or ByteDance data that is viewed,
3193 stored, or passes through China is subject to the laws of
3194 China, a one-party, authoritarian state, hostile to all
3195 American standards of privacy.

3196 China's court system reports to and falls under the
3197 Chinese Communist Party. And like fentanyl analogues, which
3198 we all know are also manufactured in China, although they are
3199 illegal there, I fear TikTok will grow into a much bigger
3200 problem -- a cancer, if you will. And I am deeply worried
3201 that it may be too late to stop the spread of this cancer.
3202 Like fentanyl, another China export which causes addiction

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3203 and death, dangerous algorithms and the Chinese Communist
3204 Party are not good for Americans, not good for our families,
3205 and definitely not good for the United States.

3206 Mr. Chew, prior to serving as the CFO of ByteDance, you
3207 served as a CFO and director of global operations for Xiaomi
3208 from 2015 to 2021. Is that correct?

3209 *Mr. Chew. Are you asking me in 2015?

3210 *Mr. Dunn. Very good --

3211 *Mr. Chew. Would you mind repeating that, please?

3212 *Mr. Dunn. Madam Chair, I would like to enter another
3213 article into evidence. This is from the National
3214 Cybersecurity Center in Lithuania.

3215 *The Chair. Without objection, so ordered.

3216 [The information follows:]

3217

3218 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

3219

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

3220 *Mr. Dunn. Thank you. This report outlines numerous
3221 data security risks, including how the privacy of European
3222 users was violated in clear cases of unauthorized collection
3223 of user data by Xiaomi. This sounds exactly -- what many of
3224 my colleagues have been talking about today.

3225 Worse yet, the Xiaomi phones sold to Europeans had a
3226 list of 449 words and phrases which would be automatically
3227 censored on the device. Censored phrases included the Voice
3228 of America and "democratic movement," among others. This
3229 analysis was conducted on devices which were manufactured and
3230 sold to Europeans while you were the head of operations for
3231 Xiaomi.

3232 It does not follow that you expect us to believe that
3233 you would not censor on behalf of the Chinese Communist
3234 Party, since you have already done so.

3235 *Mr. Chew. I want to be unequivocal on this. We do not
3236 remove or promote content on behalf of --

3237 *Mr. Dunn. I reclaim my time.

3238 *Mr. Chew. -- the Chinese Government.

3239 *Mr. Dunn. While TikTok, in your words, strives to
3240 deliver on their mission to inspire creativity and bring joy

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3241 to American users, I assure you that is not the mission or
3242 goal of the Chinese Communist Party, which runs the People's
3243 Republic of China, that TikTok's parent company, ByteDance,
3244 is domiciled in.

3245 Mr. Chew --

3246 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, you can check with our users --

3247 *Mr. Dunn. -- straightforward --

3248 *Mr. Chew. -- to see the experience that they are
3249 getting.

3250 *Mr. Dunn. -- answer. You have not given
3251 straightforward answers. We don't find you credible on these
3252 things.

3253 And with that, Madam Chair, I would like to yield the
3254 balance --

3255 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, you have given me no time to
3256 answer your questions.

3257 *Mr. Dunn. -- to Congressman Obernolte of California.

3258 *Mr. Chew. I reject the characterizations.

3259 *Mr. Dunn. I yielded to Mr. --

3260 *The Chair. Who are you yielding to?

3261 *Mr. Dunn. -- Obernolte.

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3262 *The Chair. Dr. Dunn, Mr. Obernolte?

3263 *Mr. Dunn. Yes.

3264 *The Chair. Okay.

3265 *Mr. Obernolte. Well, thank you, Madam Chair.

3266 Mr. Chew, I would like to continue our discussion of
3267 Project Texas, if we could.

3268 Part of Project Texas is that engineers at Oracle will
3269 review the algorithms used by TikTok to confirm that they are
3270 free of foreign influence. I have a question about that,
3271 because we are talking about AI. That is a very generic
3272 term. Do you use machine learning to influence the
3273 algorithms at TikTok?

3274 *Mr. Chew. This gets very technical, and we have
3275 published several blogs about this, which I can forward to
3276 your team.

3277 *Mr. Obernolte. Okay.

3278 *Mr. Chew. But yes, it is mainly based on interest
3279 signals.

3280 *Mr. Obernolte. Right, okay.

3281 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

3282 *Mr. Obernolte. So here is my question. How could

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

3283 looking at the algorithm confirm that it is for -- free from
3284 foreign influence? Because the algorithm is just a neural
3285 net architecture with inputs and outputs and weights, and how
3286 to train that.

3287 I mean, the influence is an external factor. So I would
3288 appreciate it if you could give us -- I see we are out of
3289 time again -- a written answer to that.

3290 [The information follows:]

3291

3292 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

3293

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3294 *Mr. Obernolte. But again, I am concerned that what you
3295 are proposing with Project Texas just doesn't have the
3296 technical capability of providing us the assurances that we
3297 need.

3298 I yield back, Madam Chair.

3299 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
3300 recognizes Ms. Kuster.

3301 Ms. Kuster is not here. Ms. Barragan for five minutes.

3302 *Ms. Barragan. Thank you, Madam Chair.

3303 Mr. Chew, TikTok warns users when content is graphic or
3304 disturbing, and labels state-affiliated media accounts to
3305 ensure the viewers aren't seeing propaganda. Does TikTok
3306 provide similar information to Spanish speakers -- users, as
3307 well as English speakers?

3308 *Mr. Chew. I believe so, Congresswoman. I will get
3309 back to you on that.

3310 *Ms. Barragan. Okay. And do you know if TikTok has a
3311 specific strategy for tackling Spanish language content that
3312 violates its trust and safety guidelines?

3313 *Mr. Chew. We do. I will get back to you on the
3314 specifics on that.

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3315 *Ms. Barragan. Okay. When offensive English language
3316 search terms or hashtags are blocked for violating community
3317 guidelines in English, is the Spanish translation of the term
3318 or the hashtag automatically blocked, as well?

3319 *Mr. Chew. I believe so, but let me check the specifics
3320 and get back to you.

3321 *Ms. Barragan. Do you have any idea how many people
3322 that you might have working at TikTok that addresses Spanish
3323 misinformation?

3324 *Mr. Chew. I know ballpark. It is quite a significant
3325 team, but I can get back to you on the details.

3326 *Ms. Barragan. You said significant. So are you saying
3327 it is -- do you have a ballpark at all you can give us?
3328 Would you say it is like 10 percent of your force, or more
3329 than --

3330 *Mr. Chew. It is an important number, so I want to be
3331 precise, and I will get back to you.

3332 *Ms. Barragan. Okay. Do you happen to know how TikTok
3333 -- how -- if TikTok can effectively ensure that Spanish-
3334 speaking users between the ages of 13 and 17 are not being
3335 targeted by ads promoting harmful content?

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3336 *Mr. Chew. We have very strict policies for our users
3337 who are in the teenage age group, and regardless of what
3338 language that they speak. So we want to make sure that they
3339 are given a very safe experience on our platform, regardless
3340 of the language they --

3341 *Ms. Barragan. Well, I know. I am just trying to -- I
3342 am trying to ascertain resources you may be putting into
3343 Spanish speaking -- Spanish language.

3344 Last year the Congressional Hispanic Caucus met with
3345 TikTok. This was one of the conversations, and a source of
3346 the discussion was addressing Spanish language disinformation
3347 and misinformation. It remains an urgent priority for the
3348 Congressional Hispanic Caucus, as Hispanics across the
3349 country increasingly turn to social media for vital
3350 information.

3351 We heard earlier in this hearing that there was, you
3352 know, video -- there was a TikTok post threatening the chair
3353 of the committee, and it took some 40 days to take it down.
3354 So I guess I am a little concerned if you -- if your team
3355 doesn't have the resources and the capability to flag that,
3356 what kind of capability is it going to have to bring down

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3357 misinformation, disinformation to Spanish speakers, which I
3358 am assuming is a smaller fraction of the workers that you
3359 have at TikTok?

3360 *Mr. Chew. TikTok is a place for, you know, all our
3361 users to come and express their very diverse views. And, you
3362 know, we are open to all ethnicities, you know, and we are
3363 open to all, everyone to come here and express their --
3364 freely express their views.

3365 So it is our commitment to make sure that the safety of
3366 those users, regardless of the language, you know -- and of
3367 course, you know, the Spanish language user base is super
3368 important to us.

3369 *Ms. Barragan. Okay, so you can't --

3370 *Mr. Chew. So we need to make sure that we continue to
3371 invest in that --

3372 *Ms. Barragan. Okay, so you don't have an answer, then.
3373 Okay. I will look forward in your coming back.

3374 We have heard a lot about the concerns about children
3375 who may be on TikTok. Mr. Chew, at what age do you think it
3376 would be appropriate for a young person to get on TikTok?

3377 *Mr. Chew. We have three different experiences here in

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3378 the United States. There is an experience for under 13s,
3379 which is highly, highly restricted.

3380 *Ms. Barragan. I am asking what you think would be the
3381 appropriate age to have a child get on TikTok.

3382 *Mr. Chew. Our approach is to give differentiated
3383 experiences for different age groups, and let the parents
3384 have these conversations with their children to decide what
3385 is best for their family.

3386 *Ms. Barragan. So you think that there is a sufficient
3387 safety mechanism for an eight-year-old to be able to access
3388 TikTok?

3389 *Mr. Chew. An eight-year-old's experience on TikTok
3390 would be so highly restricted that every single piece of
3391 content he or she will see will be vetted by common sense,
3392 our third-party child safety expert, and the eight-year-old
3393 would not be able to post, and the eight-year-old would not
3394 be able to see any personalized feed, and zero advertising in
3395 that experience. So I believe, yes, it is the appropriate
3396 experience for an eight-year-old.

3397 *Ms. Barragan. Well, then why don't you let your eight-
3398 year-old child on TikTok?

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3399 *Mr. Chew. I have seen these news articles. I would
3400 like to address that. My kids live in Singapore. And in
3401 Singapore we do not have the under-13 experience. If they
3402 lived here in the United States, I would let them use the
3403 under-13 experience.

3404 *Ms. Barragan. Okay. So you are saying it is because
3405 of the country you live in doesn't have the same mechanisms.
3406 Is there a reason you don't have those same mechanisms
3407 everywhere?

3408 *Mr. Chew. In principle, we want to provide, you know,
3409 a good experience for our users in general. We don't want to
3410 monetize from people who are under 13. In the U.S. we are
3411 COPPA compliant, and as part of that we will deem as a -- I
3412 want to get the specifics right. We will deem as a
3413 particular type of audience -- mixed audience app. We want
3414 to make sure that that is right. And as a result of that, we
3415 have to provide an experience to our under-13 users in this
3416 country, as well.

3417 *Ms. Barragan. My time has expired. Thank you.
3418 I yield back.

3419 *The Chair. The gentlelady yields back. The chair

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3420 recognizes the gentleman from Utah, Mr. Curtis.

3421 *Mr. Curtis. Thank you, Madam Chair.

3422 Mr. Chew, my children are getting ready to run a
3423 marathon. And I know that during this hearing that they will
3424 be running for about the same amount of time that you will be
3425 sitting in that chair today. Unfortunately, I only get you
3426 for five minutes. So instead of a marathon, I would like to
3427 do a sprint with you. And I want to go back up to that
3428 30,000-foot level.

3429 Would you agree with me that section 230 was created to
3430 protect platforms like yours from lawsuits when you
3431 distribute information?

3432 *Mr. Chew. I --

3433 *Mr. Curtis. Don't over-complicate it. Just, like,
3434 30,000 feet.

3435 *Mr. Chew. I understand.

3436 *Mr. Curtis. Yes.

3437 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

3438 *Mr. Curtis. So then would you agree that there is a
3439 line drawn between publishers of information and distributors
3440 of information in --

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3441 *Mr. Chew. I --

3442 *Mr. Curtis. Specifically in the section 230 language.

3443 *Mr. Chew. I think 230 is a very complex topic.

3444 *Mr. Curtis. Yes, I understand. But remember, we are
3445 at 30,000 feet. So in short, your platform distributes
3446 content that other peoples publish.

3447 One of the early challengers to section 230 was when AOL
3448 refused to take down a post of somebody that had
3449 inappropriately put a phone number -- associated a phone
3450 number with the Oklahoma City bombings. The courts ruled
3451 that AOL was not liable for that post because of section 230.

3452 Now, I want you to do a hypothetical with me, because I
3453 am going to use the absurd to try to make a point here.
3454 Let's suppose, hypothetically, that AOL, instead of just
3455 posting that actually wanted to magnify that voice, and so
3456 they took out an ad in The Wall Street Journal linking that
3457 phone number with the Oklahoma City bombing. And let's
3458 suppose they didn't stop there, but they went further and
3459 they took out a Super Bowl ad linking that phone number with
3460 the Oklahoma City bombing. And let's suppose,
3461 hypothetically, they didn't stop there, they sent a flier to

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3462 every home in America linking that phone number to the
3463 bombing.

3464 And I guess the question is, would AOL have moved from a
3465 distributor to a publisher in this made-up example?

3466 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, respectfully, I --

3467 *Mr. Curtis. I think everybody can see that they would.
3468 This is not a hard question. Moving that far away from the
3469 intent would have moved them to a publisher.

3470 So my question is -- platforms are protected because
3471 they post content. But I want this room to see -- not just
3472 you -- that protection has limits. And if AOL moves to a
3473 distributor instead of a publisher, they go outside of those
3474 limits.

3475 Now let's talk algorithms just super quickly. We have
3476 thrown that word around a lot today. Let me here again go
3477 30,000 feet, and we will use another platform so it is not
3478 sensitive. But Pinterest, I like to go on Pinterest. My
3479 home -- my wife and I are building a home. I am working on
3480 the yard right now. If you went on my Pinterest page, you
3481 would see swing sets, and things made for my grandkids.

3482 Now, another hypothetical. Let's suppose there is some

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3483 devious intent inside Pinterest, and they decide they want to
3484 influence John Curtis with these algorithms, and they want me
3485 to believe it is the end of the world. And all of a sudden
3486 now I am buying bomb shelters instead of swing sets for my
3487 kids. Have they become a publisher? And should that be
3488 protected from section 230?

3489 And if you don't feel -- I am pretty sure the room
3490 understands that they have crossed this line, and you can
3491 tell me if you think they have or not.

3492 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I will have to study that
3493 specific example and get back to you.

3494 *Mr. Curtis. It is a hypothetical, but you can see the
3495 -- at some point they have crossed a line, and they have
3496 become a publisher and a distributor.

3497 So we have touched on this today, but I want to be super
3498 specific. Is it possible that TikTok had enough data --
3499 could get enough data on me that you could use artificial
3500 intelligence and your algorithms and machine learning to
3501 write an algorithm that could persuade me to change how I
3502 view a policy issue? Does that possibility exist?

3503 *Mr. Chew. The way we look at it --

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3504 *Mr. Curtis. Thirty-thousand feet. We are on the
3505 sprint.

3506 *Mr. Chew. I will stay very high level.

3507 *Mr. Curtis. Okay, please.

3508 *Mr. Chew. The way we look at it is our users come in
3509 and express whatever views they want.

3510 *Mr. Curtis. But that is not the point. The point is
3511 you could write an algorithm that would change. And we have
3512 actually seen -- the Washington Post reported the Stop the
3513 Willow campaign shows how TikTokers are tackling climate
3514 change. I think that is all fine, right, and all good,
3515 unless somebody has interjected into that and magnified or
3516 diminished voices in that. And what I am proposing to you
3517 today is that that pushes them across the line from a
3518 distributor to a publisher if they make those decisions.

3519 Now, serious allegations have been made against your
3520 platform and others, many of them here today. And you are
3521 not new to these -- right, to these allegations. This isn't
3522 your platform, but some time ago there was an allegation that
3523 a platform recommended ISIS-related videos. We have talked
3524 about the weight loss videos, we have talked about -- we

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3525 didn't talk about it, but the stealing the elections.
3526 Whatever the motivation, I am trying to point out that as you
3527 move from a publisher, you manipulate this data with
3528 algorithms, that you step out from the protections of section
3529 230. Do you see that logic?

3530 *Mr. Chew. This is a very complex --

3531 *Mr. Curtis. I understand it is very complex.

3532 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

3533 *Mr. Curtis. But you see the logic. In your mind, has
3534 TikTok ever stepped across the line from a distributor to a
3535 publisher?

3536 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, again, this is a very complex
3537 topic. I would need to get back to you on --

3538 *Mr. Curtis. I understand that. Okay.

3539 And finally, very quickly, you produced a video that now
3540 is well known about your visit here today in Washington, D.C.
3541 Can you tell me 100 percent that no TikTok employees manually
3542 manipulated that to get more views?

3543 *Mr. Chew. I checked. And as far as I know, there was
3544 no boosting and heating. I went viral organically.

3545 *Mr. Curtis. Okay, Madam Chair, I am sorry, I am out of

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3546 time. I yield my time.

3547 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
3548 recognizes Ms. Blunt Rochester for five minutes.

3549 *Ms. Blunt Rochester. Thank you, Madam Chair.

3550 Mr. Chew, as I am sure you know, this hearing is part of
3551 an ongoing effort by our committee to examine data security
3552 and other concerns with social media companies broadly. And
3553 I have to tell you, I came to this hearing interested to hear
3554 the actions that TikTok is taking to combat misinformation,
3555 protect our young people, and ensure our national security.
3556 But I have not been reassured by anything you have said so
3557 far. And I think, quite frankly, your testimony has raised
3558 more questions for me than answers.

3559 As some of my colleagues already noted, platforms like
3560 TikTok can easily manipulate and undermine user autonomy with
3561 addictive features, invasive data collection practices, and
3562 disseminating misinformation and disinformation. That is why
3563 I will be reintroducing the DETOUR Act to mitigate this harm.

3564 Mr. Chew, yes or no, would you oppose legislation that
3565 banned the use of intentionally manipulative design
3566 techniques that trick users into giving up their personal

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3567 information?

3568 *Mr. Chew. In principle --

3569 *Ms. Blunt Rochester. It is just a yes or no.

3570 *Mr. Chew. In principle, I agree that the kind of
3571 practices is not --

3572 *Ms. Blunt Rochester. And can TikTok users opt out of
3573 targeted ads, yes or no?

3574 *Mr. Chew. At this moment in time, we believe that this
3575 is a very important part of the experience --

3576 *Ms. Blunt Rochester. Yes or no? Time is ticking.

3577 *Mr. Chew. It is an important part of the experience.

3578 *Ms. Blunt Rochester. If -- even if someone wants
3579 targeted ads, do you give a user a clear opportunity to
3580 prevent TikTok from using tools like pixels to collect their
3581 data and track them off of the TikTok platform?

3582 *Mr. Chew. We give our users a lot of tools to control
3583 their privacy settings on our app.

3584 And by the way, if you are below 16, it is private by
3585 default. So you cannot even go viral.

3586 *Ms. Blunt Rochester. An August of 2022 response to a
3587 letter I wrote to your company on abortion misinformation,

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3588 TikTok asserted several actions to address abortion
3589 misinformation. In light of recent attacks on safe and
3590 effective medication abortion, I am -- remain worried by this
3591 misinformation.

3592 And following on Ms. DeGette's questioning, how many
3593 posts did you actually take down that contained abortion
3594 misinformation?

3595 *Mr. Chew. Contents and views on both sides of the --
3596 on abortion is allowed on our platform. It is just freedom
3597 of expression. If it is dangerous misinformation, we rely on
3598 third-party experts to help us identify and remove them. I
3599 can get back to you on specifics.

3600 *Ms. Blunt Rochester. Yes, please get back with us --

3601 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

3602 *Ms. Blunt Rochester. -- on the specifics.

3603 Mr. Chew, in your testimony you indicated TikTok has
3604 taken several steps to implement Project Texas. You have
3605 said you have spent -- in your testimony -- \$1.5 billion, you
3606 have hired 1,500 full-time employees. Can I ask for some
3607 specifics about the implementation? This \$1.5 billion, what
3608 was it used for? The employees, were they people that you

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3609 already had that you just transferred over? And what types
3610 of roles will they have?

3611 *Mr. Chew. Oh, okay. This billion-and-a-half U.S.
3612 dollars is spread across many things, including the
3613 infrastructure we have to build, the migration of the data to
3614 a new cloud infrastructure, and all the third-party security
3615 partners that we are hiring, and, of course, the new
3616 employees.

3617 Now, this team will now be run by a gentleman who used
3618 to be the -- who has spent his career as a chief security
3619 officer in other companies, and another gentleman who used to
3620 work, I believe, in --

3621 *Ms. Blunt Rochester. If you could just follow up --

3622 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

3623 *Ms. Blunt Rochester. -- with us, that would be very
3624 helpful.

3625 *Mr. Chew. I will, I will.

3626 *Ms. Blunt Rochester. Because we would really like to
3627 understand the details. Where is the money going? How many
3628 people are -- and what will they be doing?

3629 *Mr. Chew. Okay.

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3630 *Ms. Blunt Rochester. You know, as I put just kind of a
3631 finer point on this, one of my concerns is that we came here
3632 hoping to hear some actions that would alleviate some of our
3633 concerns and our fears. We have got family members, we have
3634 a lot of folks here that are constituents, that are content
3635 creators. And for us, we were looking for action. We wanted
3636 to see -- make us feel like we really can "trust," as you
3637 use the word.

3638 What I leave here with is thinking about the fact that
3639 your company is -- I learned that you are -- you have
3640 personalized data advertising for kids as young as 13. And
3641 we have heard until Project Texas is supposedly stood up,
3642 engineers in China still have access to personal data, and
3643 that means engineers in China have access to personal data of
3644 13-year-olds in the United States. And I think that really
3645 summarizes why you see so much bipartisan consensus and
3646 concern about your company. And I imagine that it is not
3647 going away any time soon.

3648 Thank you, Madam Chair, and I yield back.

3649 *The Chair. The gentlelady yields back. I yield to the
3650 lady from Arizona, Mrs. Lesko, for five minutes.

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3651 *Mrs. Lesko. Thank you, Madam Chair.

3652 Mr. Chew, do you agree that the Chinese Government has
3653 persecuted the Uyghur population?

3654 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, you -- if you use our app and
3655 you open it, you will find our users who give all sorts of
3656 content --

3657 *Mrs. Lesko. That is not my question. My question is,
3658 do you agree that the Chinese Government has persecuted the
3659 Uyghur population?

3660 *Mr. Chew. Well, it is deeply concerning to hear about
3661 all accounts of human rights abuse. My role here is to
3662 explain --

3663 *Mrs. Lesko. I think you are being pretty evasive.

3664 *Mr. Chew. -- what our platform does on this.

3665 *Mrs. Lesko. It is a pretty easy question. Do you
3666 agree that the Chinese Government has persecuted the Uyghur
3667 population?

3668 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, I am here to describe TikTok,
3669 and what we do as a platform. And as a platform --

3670 *Mrs. Lesko. All right.

3671 *Mr. Chew. -- we allow our users to freely express

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3672 their views --

3673 *Mrs. Lesko. All right. Earlier today --

3674 *Mr. Chew. -- on this issue and any other issue that
3675 matters to them.

3676 *Mrs. Lesko. Well, you didn't answer the question.

3677 Earlier today Chairman Rodgers asked you, and I quote,
3678 "Have any moderation tools been used to remove content
3679 associated with the Uyghur genocide, yes or no?" ` ` Your
3680 answer, "We do not remove that kind of content." ` ` Yet in
3681 2019 TikTok suspended the account of Feroza Aziz, an American
3682 17-year-old, after she put out a video about the Uyghur
3683 genocide. So your answer, sir, does not align with history.

3684 *Mr. Chew. That particular case was a mis-moderation.
3685 I believe that video had a picture of Osama bin Laden, so we
3686 thought it was --

3687 *Mrs. Lesko. No, I --

3688 *Mr. Chew. -- content that was inappropriate.

3689 *Mrs. Lesko. Yes, I looked it up. That was a different
3690 post that they banned, TikTok banned.

3691 *Mr. Chew. I can get back on the specifics, yes.

3692 *Mrs. Lesko. My next question. India banned the use of

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3693 TikTok in their country in 2020. New Zealand has banned the
3694 installation of TikTok on devices connected to the country's
3695 parliamentary network. Canada banned the installation of
3696 TikTok on government devices. The United Kingdom has banned
3697 the TikTok app from government-owned devices. Belgium banned
3698 the TikTok from government phones. The European Union banned
3699 the installation of TikTok on government devices. All cited
3700 security risks with the company's data collection and
3701 connection to the Chinese Communist Party.

3702 Recently, our U.S. FBI director, Christopher Wray, said
3703 about TikTok, "This is a tool that is ultimately within the
3704 control of the Chinese Government. And it -- to me, it
3705 screams out with national security concerns.'`

3706 Mr. Chew, how can all of these countries and our own FBI
3707 director have been wrong?

3708 *Mr. Chew. I think a lot of risks that I pointed out
3709 are hypothetical and theoretical risks. I have not seen any
3710 evidence. I am, you know, eagerly awaiting discussions where
3711 we can talk about evidence, and we then can address the
3712 concerns that are being raised.

3713 *Mrs. Lesko. Yes. My next question revolves around an

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3714 article: "India Banned TikTok in 2020.'" A March 21st
3715 Forbes article revealed how troves of personal data of Indian
3716 citizens who once used TikTok remain widely accessible to
3717 employees at the company and its Beijing-based parent,
3718 ByteDance.

3719 A current TikTok employee told Forbes that nearly anyone
3720 with basic access to company tools, including employees in
3721 China, can easily look up the closest contacts and other
3722 sensitive information about any user. This current TikTok
3723 employee also said, "If you want to start a movement, if you
3724 want to divide people, if you want to do any of the operation
3725 to influence the public on the app, you can just use that
3726 information to target those groups.'"`

3727 Why would a -- Mr. Chew, why would a current TikTok
3728 employee say this if it wasn't true?

3729 *Mr. Chew. This is a recent article. I have asked my
3730 team to look into it. As far as I know, there is -- we have
3731 rigorous data access protocols. There is really no such
3732 thing where anybody can get access to tools.

3733 *Mrs. Lesko. All right.

3734 *Mr. Chew. So I disagree with a lot of the conclusions

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3735 of that.

3736 *Mrs. Lesko. Madam Chair, I request unanimous consent
3737 that the Forbes March 21st, 2023 article be added to the
3738 record.

3739 *The Chair. Without objection.

3740 [The information follows:]

3741

3742 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

3743

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3744 *Mrs. Lesko. And I have -- would like to turn over the
3745 rest of my time to Mr. Obernolte.

3746 *Mr. Obernolte. Thank you, Madam Chair.

3747 Mr. Chew, I would like to continue asking the question
3748 that we were -- ran out of time last time.

3749 So as part of Project Texas, you are going to have
3750 engineers at Oracle review the algorithms, the machine
3751 learning algorithms that TikTok uses to ensure that they are
3752 free from foreign influence. But as you and I were
3753 discussing, reviewing the algorithms doesn't do anything.
3754 The algorithms are simple. That is not where the secret
3755 sauce is. The secret sauce is in the data used to train
3756 them, and the outcomes that you are asking them to predict.
3757 Would you agree with that?

3758 *Mr. Chew. I actually believe that, with third-party
3759 monitoring, you can identify a lot of the motivation of the
3760 code. And with enough third-party experts, you can identify
3761 a lot of what the code is designed to do.

3762 *Mr. Obernolte. But how would --

3763 *Mr. Chew. So I --

3764 *Mr. Obernolte. How would you verify that you couldn't

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3765 ask the algorithm for a different outcome than the one that
3766 the rest of the source code is asking for?

3767 *Mr. Chew. The algorithm will be trained with this --
3768 it gets very technical, but it will be trained based on
3769 weights, for example. And those are things that we can
3770 verify. You know, what weights are you putting on --

3771 *Mr. Obernolte. Well, if you could give us a written
3772 response to that, I would appreciate it, because I am
3773 interested.

3774 [The information follows:]

3775

3776 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

3777

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3778 *Mr. Obernolte. Thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.

3779 *The Chair. The lady yields back. The gentleman --
3780 gentlelady yields back. The chair recognizes for five
3781 minutes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Soto.

3782 *Mr. Soto. Thank you, Madam Chair. The genie is really
3783 out of the bottle on this now, so to speak.

3784 A hundred and fifty million Americans are now on TikTok.
3785 That is almost half of America. They are expressing
3786 themselves in art and music, poetry, short film, comedy,
3787 among other creative expressions. And many of them are
3788 inspiring, talented young people. But we also on the
3789 committee recognize there is a darker side to it, right?
3790 Violence, adult themes, drug and alcohol, sexualization,
3791 suicide, all major issues on TikTok, but also Twitter,
3792 Facebook, YouTube, and other social media platforms.

3793 So the solution, as I see it, is to regulate TikTok and
3794 other social media platforms. And that job, Mr. Chew, as you
3795 know, really falls to us. There are real concerns,
3796 bipartisan common ground we have already had. We had a
3797 Federal device ban that was voted on bipartisan in the
3798 omnibus. And I co-introduced a bill with my dear friend,

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3799 Representative Cammack, about notices of that Federal ban.

3800 Madam Chair, I think the first key is privacy. We have
3801 to pass the comprehensive legislation that got out of this
3802 committee but eluded us in the last Congress. I am really
3803 hoping we can get that done, and I am really excited about
3804 hearing that from folks.

3805 The other thing is that TikTok needs to be an American
3806 company with American values, and end its ties to the Chinese
3807 Communist Party. This is something that will be critical as
3808 we look and go forward.

3809 And then three, we all agree we have to protect our
3810 kids. The committee should consider banning the use for
3811 children under 13 of not just TikTok, but all social media
3812 platforms, or at least empower parents.

3813 In addition, have rules of the road for teens that are
3814 13 to 17, so that families can do what is right for their
3815 families.

3816 So for privacy, that is on us. Internet privacy is on
3817 us.

3818 As far as being an American company, Mr. Chew, as you
3819 know, the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United

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3820 States at the Department of Treasury reviews foreign
3821 investment that affects national security. Right now they
3822 have negotiated with your company about this Oracle set-up
3823 that you have talked about, servers in an American company in
3824 America, in Texas, and then Oracle would monitor the
3825 algorithms. But pressure is mounting.

3826 So, Mr. Chew, would TikTok be prepared to divest from
3827 ByteDance and Chinese Communist Party ties if the Department
3828 of Treasury instructed you all to do so?

3829 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I said in my opening statement
3830 I think we are -- need to address the problem of privacy. I
3831 agree with you. I don't think ownership is the issue here.
3832 With a lot of respect, American social companies don't have a
3833 good track record with data privacy and user security. I
3834 mean, look at Facebook and Cambridge Analytica, just one
3835 example.

3836 So I do think that, you know, it is not about the
3837 ownership. It is a lot about making sure we have Project
3838 Texas, making sure that we are protecting and firewalling
3839 U.S. user data from unwanted foreign access, giving third
3840 parties to come in to have a look at this, and making sure

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3841 that everybody is comfortable. We are giving transparency
3842 and third-party monitoring, and that is what we are doing for
3843 Project Texas.

3844 *Mr. Soto. Well, I would at least encourage you all to
3845 start having the dialogue, should that be where the President
3846 and the Congress ends up going.

3847 The third thing is on parents. I had a constituent of
3848 mine, Brandy of Lake Nona, say, "I am a parent of 2
3849 teenagers, 14 and 18 years old, both of whom have been harmed
3850 by social media. TikTok's algorithms supply my 14-year-old
3851 son with a continuous stream of inappropriate content, and
3852 has negatively influenced his perception of all females. I
3853 noticed the attention span of both of my teens has changed or
3854 decreased dramatically, and social media has made my daughter
3855 insecure, leading to an eating disorder, and ultimately
3856 depression.' "

3857 What safeguards do you have, and what should we tell
3858 Brandy of Lake Nona on -- about how we can help her protect
3859 her children?

3860 *Mr. Chew. We have a differentiated experience. I
3861 mentioned just now about the experience. If you are below

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3862 13, very, very restricted. If you are below -- 13 to 17,
3863 Congressman, we actually have a whole series of things. The
3864 first -- the content that you see, you know, we make sure
3865 that we remove things that could be mature themes from your
3866 from your feed. We also, by default, do not allow under-16s
3867 to use direct messaging. We do not allow under-16s to -- we
3868 set their accounts to private, by default. They can't go
3869 viral. If you are below 18, we shut off some features for
3870 you. Like, for example, you are not allowed to post live
3871 streams. Neither are you allowed to send virtual gifts.

3872 So we take this very seriously, and we want to continue
3873 to build to ensure that we are giving our under-18 teenagers
3874 on our platform -- although they -- today they are only a
3875 minority of our user base today, but we still take it very
3876 seriously.

3877 *Mr. Soto. Mr. Chew, I would encourage you to continue
3878 thinking about how to get the word out to parents across the
3879 nation on some of these tools, as well, as we here craft a
3880 privacy law that will help provide well-needed regulation to
3881 social media companies across the nation.

3882 Thank you, and I yield back.

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3883 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
3884 recognizes the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Pence, for five
3885 minutes.

3886 *Mr. Pence. Thank you, Chairwoman Rodgers and Ranking
3887 Member Pallone, for holding this hearing. I love both of
3888 your opening remarks.

3889 Like my colleagues have discussed today, our
3890 increasingly digital world leaves Hoosiers and all Americans
3891 in the dark about who has access to their information. For
3892 TikTok users, that could be third-party data brokers,
3893 advertisers, or the Chinese Communist Party. TikTok
3894 aggressively feeds addictive content to users to glean
3895 massive amounts of personal data that is worth a fortune.
3896 For Hoosiers watching at home, this isn't just data about
3897 your favorite sports team.

3898 You know, if there really are 150 million users in the
3899 U.S., this suggests to me that the CCP has a finger on the
3900 pulse of almost half our nation's population. I find that
3901 hard to believe. But this week I decided I would ask my
3902 constituents in southern Indiana to share their stories with
3903 me. I went out Monday night, and we got 800 responses in

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3904 less than 12 hours, okay? Let me share a couple of those
3905 with you.

3906 One of my constituents shared, I quote, "I am a mental
3907 health counselor. Most of my teenage clients are on TikTok.
3908 They spend hours online being negatively influenced by
3909 others. I have seen kids experience self-harm, gender
3910 dysphoria, and many mental illnesses they have picked up from
3911 TikTok. I will not allow my children to have TikTok. The
3912 creators know the algorithms are addicting our children.
3913 They know that children are suffering more anxiety and
3914 depression from screen time, but they do not care. They will
3915 not change their algorithms because it is financially
3916 lucrative for them to keep their kids addicted.'`

3917 Another parent said, "We let our child, our daughter,
3918 try it out. The feed was continuously suggesting sexually
3919 explicit, stupid, and vulgar videos. We discontinued it
3920 within a week.'` And there has been many more, many more.
3921 Like I said, 800, okay?

3922 In your testimony, Mr. Chew, you walked through a number
3923 of supposed actions taken by your company to create a safe
3924 environment, empower parents to oversee content shown to

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3925 their children. But virtually everything we have heard
3926 reflects the opposite. And some of your answers are a little
3927 confusing.

3928 You know, all of those sitting here and maybe watching
3929 on C-SPAN, this is the thirty-second hearing we have held
3930 about privacy and Big Tech. Each hearing I have been part
3931 of, we have heard the same stories about our constituents'
3932 experience, and the same promises for Big Tech to do better.
3933 The truth of the matter is, this disgusting and dangerous
3934 content littered across your platform is not justifiable, and
3935 it is uncontrollable. Americans' data is not safe, and Big
3936 Tech is doing nothing to protect it.

3937 Putting aside the dangers of the CCP involvement and
3938 after these 32 hearings, I believe it is actually time to
3939 change the narrative, change the focus, and change the
3940 outcome by talking about the money you are making at TikTok.
3941 Mr. Chew, I have a question. How much revenue is generated
3942 per user?

3943 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, we --

3944 *Mr. Pence. It is a private company, and you are not
3945 going to tell me.

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3946 *Mr. Chew. A private company, yes.

3947 *Mr. Pence. Does each user receive a comparable benefit
3948 for the amount of profit their data brings to your company?

3949 *Mr. Chew. We do share some revenue with some creators
3950 who produce, say, one-minute-plus informative content.

3951 *Mr. Pence. Thanks. When am I going to get paid for
3952 the data that you are selling or your -- or you are getting
3953 revenue from advertisers -- when am I going to get paid for
3954 the data you are getting from my children, my grandchildren,
3955 my neighbors? I think that is the only way to get your
3956 attention, is talk about the money you are making, and maybe
3957 that will get you all to do what you are supposed to do.

3958 *Mr. Chew. I respect and understand your opinion. The
3959 vast majority of our users have a great experience. I sent a
3960 video recently, as well. I got hundreds of thousands of
3961 comments.

3962 *Mr. Pence. But what am I getting? It is a great
3963 experience? What about these 800 bad experiences that people
3964 in the Indiana 6th district have been getting?

3965 *Mr. Chew. We will look into them, and a lot of the
3966 issues --

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3967 *Mr. Pence. You are going to look into it? But this is
3968 my -- this is the thirty-second Big Tech hearing, and you are
3969 always going to look at it. Frankly, I think you are all
3970 stalling is what you are doing. You are just trying to buy
3971 time while you are making the 18 billion, perhaps, whatever
3972 you are making.

3973 *Mr. Chew. I -- the majority of our users have a great
3974 experience on our platform. It is our duty to keep it safe.
3975 I agree with you. That is why our commitment is to make sure
3976 that safety --

3977 *Mr. Pence. I think it is --

3978 *Mr. Chew. -- is a priority for --

3979 *Mr. Pence. I think it is your duty to pay attention to
3980 what you are doing, and maybe you paying people for the
3981 information that you are getting from it is a way to get that
3982 done.

3983 Thank you, I yield back.

3984 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
3985 recognizes the gentlelady from Washington, Ms. Schrier, for
3986 five minutes.

3987 *Ms. Schrier. Thank you for being here, Mr. Chew. I am

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3988 really concerned about everything that we are hearing in this
3989 conversation today, and I appreciate your good intentions,
3990 but the actions are really falling short.

3991 As a pediatrician and the parent of a teenager, I am
3992 particularly concerned about how social media generally and
3993 TikTok specifically is affecting our kids and teens. We just
3994 heard a lot about this from testimony from a psychologist.

3995 Last year the American Academy of Pediatrics sounded the
3996 alarm about our children's mental health crisis. And as a
3997 pediatrician, I know this has been going on for more than a
3998 decade. In fact, it tracks perfectly with social media
3999 engagement. And during the pandemic, teens who are missing
4000 out on in-person interactions turned even more to social
4001 media to connect with friends.

4002 Social media is designed to be addicting. That is the
4003 business model. And your platform is the most addictive of
4004 all. And this endless, mindless scrolling takes teens away
4005 from human relationships. And here is what is important. It
4006 keeps teens awake all night, well past their bedtime at a
4007 time in their lives when sleep is critical for brain and
4008 physical development. In fact, sleep deprivation alone --

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4009 ignoring even content -- alone can cause depression, anxiety,
4010 social withdrawal, inattention, poor coping skills, and
4011 academic failure.

4012 So, Mr. Chew, I just want to follow up a little bit on
4013 what my colleague, Mr. Sarbanes, was discussing. It is your
4014 business model to keep eyes on the app, to keep it addictive.
4015 I know you likely have experts who have advised you on how to
4016 design this to keep those eyes on your platform for the
4017 longest possible time. So I want to know if you have
4018 psychologists or other health experts on staff looking at
4019 screen time, hours of use, and sleep.

4020 *Mr. Chew. We worked with the Digital Wellness Lab,
4021 Congresswoman, and -- at the Boston Children's Hospital, and
4022 we came up with a 60-minute default limit for any users under
4023 18.

4024 *Ms. Schrier. Okay, so that is a --

4025 *Mr. Chew. We were the first to do it in our industry.

4026 *Ms. Schrier. That is an opt out, and I can tell you
4027 they are going to immediately opt out. It is addictive.

4028 *Mr. Chew. We also give tools --

4029 *Ms. Schrier. It is like asking a chain smoker not to

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4030 take the next cigarette. It is not going to happen.

4031 And by the way, so -- first I have a question, then I
4032 will go back to Boston Children's. Mr. Sarbanes asked
4033 earlier, what is the percentage of teens who actually adhere
4034 to the 60-minute limit?

4035 *Mr. Chew. I would need to check on those numbers and
4036 get back to you on specifics.

4037 *Ms. Schrier. I would appreciate those numbers.

4038 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

4039 *Ms. Schrier. I am guessing it is an incredibly low
4040 percentage who actually heed that.

4041 Now, as far as Boston Children's goes, I know you are
4042 referring to them as a source for these ideas about, you
4043 know, go outside, get some air, take some time out. But I
4044 can tell you, as a pediatrician, I am guessing their
4045 suggestions were a little stronger than that. And so I am
4046 wondering, what is the next step? What are you doing when
4047 you find out that almost nobody is really opting out after 60
4048 minutes, to take this burden off of the kids and off of the
4049 parents, and change your algorithms to make them not so
4050 hooked?

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4051 *Mr. Chew. We give our parents, as you pointed out, the
4052 family -- the family pairing tool. And in that tool, if you
4053 pair it with your teenager's phone, you can actually set a
4054 restriction, how many minutes. And we believe it is very
4055 important for parents to have these conversations with their
4056 teenagers, so -- to decide what is best for their family.

4057 I also -- Congresswoman, a lot of people come to our
4058 platform to have a really informative experience. Like I
4059 said, there were 116 billion pieces of content on STEM, and
4060 we are creating a feed dedicated to that. Book Talk has 115
4061 billion --

4062 *Ms. Schrier. We also -- we have also heard today that
4063 well over 20 percent of the information is misinformation.
4064 We heard that about medical remedies that are not really
4065 remedies. We have heard it about mental health topics.

4066 I mean, this becomes very dangerous, especially when
4067 people who are not trained to think very critically are being
4068 given information and thinking that it is true. And you have
4069 said many times that the destructive information isn't
4070 available to kids, but it is. Like, we keep seeing examples
4071 here.

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4072 And so I am just wondering, what are you going to do
4073 with the algorithms? I mean, just because you are removing
4074 something that says anorexia, bulimia, or eating disorder,
4075 that doesn't do it. If you show girls repeatedly skinny
4076 bodies and advice on how to cook meals that are less than 300
4077 calories, that is dangerous.

4078 *Mr. Chew. We have worked with -- first of all, all --
4079 anything that glorifies eating disorders, we remove that from
4080 our platform as violative. We are working with experts now.
4081 It is a challenging problem for our industry, but we are
4082 actually identify -- identifying some of these themes that
4083 you are talking about, and trying to build models where that
4084 kind of content is not up for the younger users. So it is
4085 something we take very seriously, too.

4086 *Ms. Schrier. We are seeing eating disorders in
4087 elementary-age kids now, and I need you to expedite that
4088 process as much as possible, because parents out there are
4089 worried, and I am worried as a pediatrician. Parents can't
4090 take themselves off of these platforms. Kids, there is no
4091 way they are going to take themselves off. And we need you
4092 to do your part. It may affect your bottom line, but it

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4093 could save this generation.

4094 *Mr. Chew. I share your concerns, and I commit to doing
4095 more.

4096 *Ms. Schrier. I yield back.

4097 *The Chair. The gentlelady yields back. The chair
4098 recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Joyce.

4099 *Mr. Joyce. Thank you, Chair Rodgers and Ranking Member
4100 Pallone, for holding this hearing.

4101 According to an August 2022 article in the New York
4102 Times, TikTok's in-app web browser can track every individual
4103 keystroke made by a user. We have heard today about the
4104 various ways in which the app's code could be used to monitor
4105 or track users. And likewise, we have heard concerns that
4106 this data may not be fully isolated from access by the
4107 Chinese Communist Party.

4108 That said, I would like to know more about the
4109 historical non-public U.S. personal data that your company
4110 has already amassed. Mr. Chew, you have publicly stated that
4111 the non-public information of TikTok users in the United
4112 States is being transferred to an Oracle-based cloud
4113 infrastructure because of safety concerns. Will that be

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4114 completed by the end of this week, by the end of this month?

4115 What is the outline for dealing with that data that you
4116 have already amassed?

4117 *Mr. Chew. All new data is already stored by default in
4118 this Oracle Cloud infrastructure, with the --

4119 *Mr. Joyce. No, I am talking about the data that you
4120 have already amassed.

4121 *Mr. Chew. We are in the process of deleting.

4122 *Mr. Joyce. What timeline will that data be able to be
4123 stored?

4124 *Mr. Chew. We will -- I believe we will be able to get
4125 it done this year. I am hiring --

4126 *Mr. Joyce. This year. Thank you. It is not going to
4127 occur any time soon.

4128 To be clear, until that data transfer happens, user data
4129 remains accessible to the Chinese Communist Party.

4130 On March 1st of this year, the committee asked you when
4131 you plan to delete non-public historical U.S. user data. Are
4132 you aware of this?

4133 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I disagree with this assessment
4134 that the Chinese Government can get access to the data. It

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4135 is really for -- look, this is a private company. This is
4136 what -- Chinese employees --

4137 *Mr. Joyce. You responded in writing to this committee.
4138 I have the response that we got back from you on March 7th,
4139 just 6 days later. Your attorneys wrote, "The company" -- I
4140 am quoting -- "The company plans to begin the process of
4141 deleting non-public historic U.S. user data this month, and
4142 anticipates that the process will be completed this year."

4143 You came up with a supposed plan in the summer of 2022,
4144 specifically based on our concerns that the communist Chinese
4145 government was spying on U.S. users. But you only just came
4146 up with the idea to delete historic non-public U.S. data just
4147 two weeks ago?

4148 Let me read it again: On March 7th, your attorneys
4149 wrote -- and I quote -- "The company plans to begin the
4150 process of deleting non-public historical U.S. data this
4151 month, and anticipates that the process will be completed
4152 this year."

4153 Mr. Chew, did you just come up with this plan only
4154 because we asked about it on March 1st?

4155 *Mr. Chew. No, we started deleting this --

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4156 *Mr. Joyce. Because that is what it looks like to me.

4157 *Mr. Chew. We hired a third-party auditor --

4158 *Mr. Joyce. This is incredibly disappointing.

4159 *Mr. Chew. -- to help us with this.

4160 *Mr. Joyce. Wouldn't you agree that awaiting even
4161 minutes for this personal privacy protection is absolutely
4162 wrong, and it is not in the best interest of your users?

4163 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, respectfully, there are many
4164 companies that use a global workforce. We are not the only
4165 one. We are just taking action after hearing --

4166 *Mr. Joyce. Given the delay --

4167 *Mr. Chew. Many other companies have not.

4168 *Mr. Joyce. -- in reading this data, and what we have
4169 already established about the ability of the Chinese
4170 Communist Party to access personal user data, would you agree
4171 that no U.S. Government electronic devices should have access
4172 to TikTok platform, as your lackluster security currently
4173 stands?

4174 *Mr. Chew. I disagree with that characterization. Like
4175 I said, the U.S. --

4176 *Mr. Joyce. Do you think that any individual should be

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4177 utilizing that on any government platform?

4178 *Mr. Chew. I think the government devices should have
4179 no social media apps, to be honest, but --

4180 *Mr. Joyce. And particularly TikTok.

4181 *Mr. Chew. -- targeted to us.

4182 *Mr. Joyce. Mr. Chew, during this hearing you have
4183 mentioned several times that there is a "different
4184 experience," your words, for children under the age of 13.

4185 *Mr. Chew. That is correct.

4186 *Mr. Joyce. A different experience. Mr. Chew, do you
4187 allow your children under the age of 13 to participate in
4188 TikTok? Yes or no.

4189 *Mr. Chew. I did just explain this in detail. This
4190 experience doesn't exist in Singapore, where my children
4191 live. If my children lived here, then yes.

4192 *Mr. Joyce. Based on what we have heard today, it is
4193 clear to me that TikTok, as a company, cannot be trusted, and
4194 that Americans remain significantly at risk because of the
4195 TikTok app. I still contend that TikTok is the spy in
4196 Americans' pockets.

4197 I want to acknowledge that TikTok does have the ability

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4198 to make those changes. But unfortunately, we have not heard
4199 that from you today. We have not heard a commitment to be
4200 able to protect the personal privacy that Americans expect
4201 and that Americans deserve.

4202 Thank you, Madam Chair, and I yield the remainder of my
4203 time.

4204 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
4205 recognizes Mrs. Trahan for five minutes.

4206 *Mrs. Trahan. Thank you, Madam Chair.

4207 Mr. Chew, many Big Tech CEOs have sat where you are
4208 seated today and tried to run out the clock during a hearing
4209 like this one. They were trained not to answer questions,
4210 and just wait for the news cycle to pass so that they could
4211 get on with business as usual. Those same executives want
4212 this moment, TikTok's moment under the microscope, to
4213 distract Congress and the American people from the very real
4214 issues that exist on their platforms.

4215 You have an opportunity to turn the tables on them.
4216 While U.S.-based social media giants have regressed on
4217 protections for children and teens, on protecting our data
4218 privacy, and on embracing transparency, you can lead, and you

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4219 should lead. Last month you announced that TikTok would
4220 expand access to its researcher API. But I am concerned that
4221 your new policy could be more bark than bite, that it won't
4222 actually lead to the rigorous research that we, as lawmakers,
4223 and that parents and everyday TikTok users need.

4224 In fact, your terms of service demand that researchers
4225 delete their data at TikTok's unilateral direction. It puts
4226 onerous restrictions on how researchers' findings can be
4227 published, and it only allows access to public data, which
4228 researchers already have access to within the app.

4229 In order to actually address the content moderation and
4230 algorithmic amplification concerns that my colleagues have
4231 raised here today and that I have heard about directly from
4232 parents in my home state of Massachusetts, independent
4233 researchers, not just other tech companies like Oracle, need
4234 to be able to evaluate how TikTok's algorithm is making
4235 decisions to promote content.

4236 Mr. Chew, will you commit to expanding your API to
4237 include data that would let researchers investigate how your
4238 algorithm is pushing content to users, whether it is showing
4239 up on your For You page, the hashtag page, or somewhere else?

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4240 *Mr. Chew. We are -- one of the commitments I gave in
4241 the opening statement is a commitment to transparency and
4242 third-party monitoring. So Congresswoman, I will look into
4243 the details of that, and get back to you.

4244 *Mrs. Trahan. And as well as the algorithm, including
4245 data on what types of users were targeted by the algorithm so
4246 that researchers can fully understand what content is being
4247 prioritized and who it is being pushed to.

4248 *Mr. Chew. Again, we have a commitment to transparency.
4249 These are very important questions, and I will get back to
4250 you on the specifics.

4251 *Mrs. Trahan. Under this same proposal, you require
4252 that researchers give TikTok "worldwide, free, non-exclusive,
4253 and perpetual" rights to their papers. This threatens to
4254 clash directly with well-established practices of exclusive
4255 publication rights in research journals.

4256 Mr. Chew, why does TikTok need those rights?

4257 *Mr. Chew. I would need to get back to you on the
4258 specifics, if that is okay.

4259 *Mrs. Trahan. Yes. I don't see how we can expect
4260 researchers to do their work under these terms, and then tout

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4261 transparency.

4262 I am going to shift gears with the time that I have
4263 remaining, Mr. Chew. I would like to talk about TikTok's
4264 efforts to protect children and young users. In 2021 the
4265 UK's age-appropriate design code went into effect, mandating
4266 15 standards that companies like you need to follow to
4267 protect children on your platform. You still operate in the
4268 United Kingdom, which means you should be in compliance with
4269 this code.

4270 So my question is simple: Will you commit to extending
4271 the protections currently afforded children in the UK to the
4272 millions of kids and teens who use your app here in the
4273 United States?

4274 *Mr. Chew. We take the safety of the younger users on
4275 our platform very seriously. Every --

4276 *Mrs. Trahan. That is a good way to prove it.

4277 *Mr. Chew. Every country is a little bit different in
4278 context, and in -- so let me look at the specifics, and bring
4279 some of the best practices across the world. But --

4280 *Mrs. Trahan. Well, those best practices are in -- they
4281 are being executed around the world. We just want the same

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4282 for our kids here in the United States.

4283 I mean, Mr. Chew, when we spoke a couple of weeks ago
4284 you indicated interest in taking steps to earn trust, our
4285 trust. And to me, it hasn't happened today so far. But
4286 rather, you have ducked behind industry standards and
4287 comparables to your competitors, which we know are woefully
4288 insufficient.

4289 I strongly urge you to consider these terms, these
4290 commitments. Make the case for why you are different from
4291 your American competitors, and do better on -- than them on
4292 transparency, which you have mentioned countless times today,
4293 but which we don't really have anything tangible to point to.

4294 *Mr. Chew. Yes, I don't want to make excuses for our
4295 industry or ourselves. I think there is a lot of work that
4296 needs to be done. We take this very seriously. Nothing is
4297 -- it is not perfect. We need to keep investing to stay
4298 ahead of our growth.

4299 So I agree that, you know, we need to prioritize safety,
4300 and continue to do that as part of our company. And --

4301 *Mrs. Trahan. Well, I look forward to getting back your
4302 comments and your commitments, and those updated terms of

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4303 service when you write back to the committee.

4304 [The information follows:]

4305

4306 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

4307

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4308 *Mrs. Trahan. Thank you, Madam Chair.

4309 *Mr. Chew. Thank you.

4310 *Mrs. Trahan. I yield back.

4311 *The Chair. The gentlelady yields back. The chair
4312 recognizes the gentleman from North Dakota, Mr. Armstrong,
4313 for five minutes.

4314 *Mr. Armstrong. Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, we
4315 have heard a lot today about the procedural safeguards,
4316 independent code review, server locations, and the corporate
4317 independence between ByteDance and the CCP. But I think
4318 there is something else a little more telling.

4319 You know, when you were asked about Chinese censorship,
4320 you pivoted immediately to drug use in Singapore. You have
4321 absolutely tied yourself in knots to avoid criticizing the
4322 CCP's treatment of the Uyghur population. And I think it
4323 begs the first question: before we ever get to Project
4324 Texas, which I will get to in a second, if the CCP demanded
4325 that ByteDance hand over all of the data that they had on
4326 user -- on U.S. users in their possession and ByteDance
4327 refused, I wonder what would happen. I wonder if Jack Ma
4328 might have an opinion on that, and I wonder if he would be

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4329 allowed to give it.

4330 But let's talk about Project Texas for a second.

4331 Project Texas envisions a new U.S.-based TikTok subsidiary.

4332 You have stated that this arrangement is unprecedented. I

4333 would argue the reason it is unprecedented is because it

4334 requires continual oversight and monitoring by the U.S. of a

4335 private business because it poses a national security threat.

4336 The new subsidiary's board would report to and be

4337 approved by CFIUS. CFIUS will also specify hiring

4338 requirements, as well as interact with Oracle as it performs

4339 its data role. That is an extraordinary corporate governance

4340 structure. I have questioned whether it complies with

4341 corporate law and fiduciary duty to shareholders.

4342 Yet the core concern is that the -- proposes

4343 unparalleled integration with the U.S. Government with a

4344 private company, which will require significant government

4345 resources, all of that to allow a continued operation of a

4346 social media platform that has serious national security

4347 implications. And CFIUS's workload has already dramatically

4348 increased in recent years, with a 30 percent increase in

4349 declarations and a 45 percent increase in joint voluntary

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4350 notices. And there is bipartisan consensus that CFIUS needs
4351 to be expanded as we speak.

4352 The only -- Mr. Chew, can you identify any similar
4353 corporate arrangement that requires Federal Government to
4354 expand such resources to monitor an alleged data privacy and
4355 national security risk?

4356 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I am not an expert on this
4357 matter. I believe that there are certain similar
4358 arrangements, but I am not the expert on this matter.

4359 *Mr. Armstrong. Well, the only one I could find was the
4360 UK created the Huawei Cyber Security Evaluation Center in
4361 2010 to assess Huawei's tech, and to detect malicious
4362 activity and guard UK's networks. That has worked so well
4363 that the United Kingdom is now planning on kicking Huawei out
4364 of Great Britain.

4365 You have stated that TikTok has invested \$1.5 billion in
4366 Project Texas. Are you aware of any discussions or proposals
4367 that entail TikTok funding or offsetting the costs of CFIUS's
4368 role?

4369 *Mr. Chew. Those discussions are -- I need to get back
4370 on you -- on the specifics. But I can tell you, yes, we did

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4371 spend approximately 1.5 billion U.S. dollars on our side.

4372 *Mr. Armstrong. You spent \$1.5 billion on Project
4373 Texas. But do you have any -- I mean, you agree that, if
4374 CFIUS takes on this role, they are going to need a massive
4375 influx of dollars in human resources, right?

4376 *Mr. Chew. I cannot speak on behalf of CFIUS,
4377 Congressman.

4378 *Mr. Armstrong. Should the U.S. Government expend such
4379 resources to create this extraordinary arrangement for
4380 TikTok, especially considering alleged data privacy and
4381 national security risks?

4382 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I cannot speak on behalf of the
4383 United States --

4384 *Mr. Armstrong. Well, the Project Texas doesn't work
4385 without CFIUS, right? And Project Texas, as you guys have
4386 proposed it, does not work without CFIUS involvement.

4387 *Mr. Chew. The idea behind Project Texas is the
4388 firewall of U.S. user data, make sure it is stored by an
4389 American company overseen by American personnel, and we will
4390 invite third-party monitors to monitor this. So that, in
4391 essence, at least as far as I know, is the majority of the

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4392 cost, because it will rely on not just us building the
4393 infrastructure, but us, you know, finding and hiring these
4394 third-party monitors who are vetted to come in and monitor
4395 this structure.

4396 *Mr. Armstrong. You talked earlier about the
4397 shareholder's ownership of TikTok, and you said 60 percent
4398 global investors, 20 percent is employees, and 20 percent is
4399 original founders. Are all those voting shares the same?

4400 *Mr. Chew. No, the founder has weighted voting rights,
4401 as is common in our industry.

4402 *Mr. Armstrong. So do -- as far as a voting block of
4403 shares owned in ByteDance, do you know if the Chinese
4404 Communist Party -- not Chinese Communist Party officials, the
4405 Chinese Communist Party -- do you know what their percentage
4406 of the actual voting block share of ByteDance is?

4407 *Mr. Chew. The Chinese Communist Party doesn't have
4408 voting rights in ByteDance.

4409 *Mr. Armstrong. Chinese Communist Party members is a
4410 different question. Do the founders control the voting block
4411 of ByteDance's shares?

4412 *Mr. Chew. I do know that the founder himself is not a

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4413 member of the Communist Party, but we don't know the
4414 political affiliation of our employees, because that is not
4415 something we ask.

4416 *Mr. Armstrong. Does the Chinese Government know the
4417 political affiliation of their Chinese citizens?

4418 *Mr. Chew. I cannot answer that question on their
4419 behalf.

4420 *Mr. Armstrong. I yield back.

4421 *Mr. Chew. The gentleman yields back. I yield to the
4422 lady from -- the gentlelady from New Hampshire, Ms. Kuster,
4423 five minutes.

4424 *Ms. Kuster. Thank you, Madam Chair.

4425 Mr. Chew, I just want to say I agree with all of the
4426 comments of many of my colleagues today that we need to take
4427 a close look at whether TikTok poses a national security
4428 risk. For today I am going to focus my limited time on how
4429 TikTok can better protect its youngest users. And I think a
4430 number of us have identified as parents today, and have
4431 serious concerns, as we relayed to you.

4432 Just this week I heard from a parent in my district in
4433 Nashua, New Hampshire, whose child was served harmful content

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4434 on TikTok, and has needed counseling as a result. This
4435 experience is not unique to this family, and it underscores
4436 the need for better child protections on your app.

4437 I would like to dig further into TikTok's current safety
4438 and privacy controls for children. I understand that TikTok
4439 restricts certain app capabilities for users under age 18,
4440 and has additional restrictions for users under age 16 or 13,
4441 such as limiting who can interact with them on the platform.
4442 However, these protections are worthless if any savvy child
4443 can easily bypass these age restrictions by deleting their
4444 own account and creating a new one with a different age. And
4445 by "easily," I mean you can literally go in and open another
4446 account using the same email address.

4447 So I have been made aware by child safety groups,
4448 including Fair Play for Kids and Common Sense, that it is
4449 that simple for young users to bypass the age restrictions on
4450 TikTok. Yes or no, are you aware of this issue?

4451 *Mr. Chew. I apologize. I think that is a great issue
4452 -- question that you raised. If a user inputs an age and is
4453 blocked, my understanding is that if the user tries to do it
4454 again within a short period of time -- and I won't disclose

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4455 publicly --

4456 *Ms. Kuster. We did it in our office yesterday. You
4457 can go right back in, use the exact same email address, and
4458 open a new account. So can I get your commitment that you
4459 will at least fix that bug?

4460 *Mr. Chew. I will go and have a look at it, yes.

4461 *Ms. Kuster. Thank you. If -- we are here today to
4462 talk TikTok and not other platforms, but I am happy to look
4463 at legislative solutions.

4464 In the interim, TikTok has a responsibility to do more
4465 to protect its young users, and I will accept your commitment
4466 to take a look at fixing that issue. Will you -- let's see
4467 -- sorry. I recognize that TikTok has made efforts to
4468 provide parents and guardians -- increase options to monitor
4469 and limit their child's activity on the app, including family
4470 pairing and time limit features. But I still have concerns.

4471 In order to access family pairing, parents then must
4472 download the app onto their phone, and this sounds like a
4473 design to lure more users onto the app, rather than a
4474 practical safety feature. Furthermore, downloading the app
4475 may not be a viable option for many patients -- parents.

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4476 Mr. Chew, will TikTok commit to developing other methods
4477 for parents to monitor their child's use of the app without
4478 having to download the TikTok app on their phone?

4479 *Mr. Chew. I can look into that specifically, and get
4480 back to you.

4481 *Ms. Kuster. Okay.

4482 *Mr. Chew. But the family pairing that you mentioned is
4483 a very good tool that we developed. I encourage parents with
4484 teenagers to --

4485 *Ms. Kuster. But it is not a perfect --

4486 *Mr. Chew. -- to use it.

4487 *Ms. Kuster. -- tool, and let me just say one of my
4488 concerns is that the minimum time limit TikTok lets parents
4489 set for their children is 40 minutes, which, for a young
4490 child, is a very long period of time. Actually giving
4491 parents control would mean providing them the freedom to set
4492 the screen time that makes sense for their family.

4493 Now, I have got a copy of the app page that shows just
4494 the four options. Would you commit to adding another option,
4495 so that the parent can easily set their own screen time
4496 limit?

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4497 *Mr. Chew. I can take a look at that.

4498 *Ms. Kuster. I think it is important. I think parents
4499 are looking for control. They are looking to allow their
4500 family to use these apps without TikTok taking over their
4501 child's media use.

4502 I have heard use reports -- I have heard reports of
4503 users struggling to access the feature. And so I will look
4504 forward to hearing back from you on adding an "other," so
4505 that a parent can add a custom limit.

4506 So finally, I ask that you commit to report back to this
4507 committee and the American public on how TikTok addresses
4508 these safety issues, and the steps that you are taking to
4509 default children's accounts to the most protective possible
4510 settings.

4511 And with that, Madam Chair, I yield back.

4512 *The Chair. The gentlelady yields back. I yield to --
4513 the chair yields to the gentleman from Ohio.

4514 Five minutes, Mr. Balderson.

4515 *Mr. Balderson. Thank you, Madam Chair.

4516 Thank you, Mr. Chew, for being here today.

4517 I would like to start by inserting into the record a

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4518 report entitled, "TikTok, ByteDance and Their Ties to the
4519 Chinese Communist Party," which was published by the
4520 Australian Parliament just over a week ago. If I could add
4521 that to the record, please.

4522 *The Chair. Without objection, so ordered.

4523 [The information follows:]

4524

4525 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

4526

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

4527 *Mr. Balderson. Thank you, Madam Chair.

4528 Mr. Chew, we know that your company's algorithm has been
4529 exposed for delivering videos to China that encourages them
4530 to develop eating disorders, promotes challenges that have
4531 caused children to accidentally commit suicide, glorifies the
4532 use of drugs and pornography. Despite the constant media
4533 coverage of this issue, your company continues to feed our
4534 children this dangerous and harmful content.

4535 Can you explain to parents back in my congressional
4536 district why it should be their burden and not TikTok's to
4537 set up the guardian parental controls for their children so
4538 that they do not view content which encourages eating
4539 disorders or committing suicide?

4540 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I take these issues very
4541 seriously. If the user is between -- is a teenage user on
4542 our platform, we actually have a differentiated experience,
4543 including certain models that we are building with experts to
4544 help identify certain content that is not inherently harmful,
4545 but could lead people to eating disorders. Anything that
4546 glorifies eating disorders is violative of our platform, and
4547 we remove that. And I want to assure you that I take this

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4548 very, very seriously, this commitment.

4549 *Mr. Balderson. Okay. Mr. Curtis, my colleague,
4550 mentioned the use of a heating tool on your platform to make
4551 specific videos go viral or get more views. Does TikTok use
4552 a cooling tool, where employees can manually limit the
4553 amplification of content that TikTok should hide, like
4554 content that promotes eating disorders, drug use, or suicide
4555 among children?

4556 *Mr. Chew. The only promotion tool that we have is
4557 approved by the local teams -- so in the U.S. by the U.S.
4558 team -- and it is for commercial purposes. Like Taylor
4559 Swift, you know, I think when she onboarded we, you know,
4560 heated --

4561 *Mr. Balderson. So would that be a yes or no?

4562 *Mr. Chew. My -- I just want to make sure that I am
4563 answering your question with specifics.

4564 *Mr. Balderson. If this tool exists, why isn't it being
4565 used to cool then the spread of dangerous content? I mean,
4566 why is it still happening?

4567 *Mr. Chew. Dangerous content has -- that violates, we
4568 remove them. When we see them, we actually remove them from

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4569 the platform.

4570 *Mr. Balderson. Okay. The fact of the matter here is
4571 that, despite whatever action you take, that TikTok is taking
4572 to protect teens, your algorithm continues to promote harmful
4573 content. Wouldn't you agree that indicates there is
4574 something inherently wrong with the algorithm your platform
4575 employs?

4576 *Mr. Chew. I do respectfully disagree with that. The
4577 algorithm drives a great user experience for many, many
4578 users. Well, I talked about STEM content. That has 116
4579 billion views on our platform. One more example: Book Talk
4580 is a trend that happened on our platform. It is to encourage
4581 people to read. And globally, it has 115 billion views, and
4582 it is fantastic. I have heard people telling me that they
4583 are reading more because of Book Talk. So there is a lot of
4584 good, and joy, and positive that can be derived from the
4585 TikTok experience. Yes, there are some bad actors who come
4586 in and post violative content, and it is our job to remove
4587 them. But the overwhelming experience is a very positive one
4588 for our community.

4589 *Mr. Balderson. But if it is your job to remove them,

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4590 it has been said many times here today about the 41 days that
4591 that video stood up with addressing Mrs. -- the chairwoman.

4592 *Mr. Chew. After this I am going to go and look into
4593 the specifics of that.

4594 *Mr. Balderson. All right, thank you.

4595 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

4596 *Mr. Balderson. Madam Chair, I yield back.

4597 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
4598 recognizes the lady from Texas, Mrs. Fletcher, for five
4599 minutes.

4600 *Mrs. Fletcher. Thank you, Chairwoman McMorris Rodgers,
4601 and thanks to Ranking Member Pallone for holding today's
4602 hearing. And thank you, Mr. Chew, for appearing today.

4603 It has been a long day, but we are here to learn about a
4604 complex set of issues that relate to TikTok and how to
4605 address them. And I think that is what we are hearing from
4606 colleagues on both sides of the aisle today, is a real effort
4607 to grapple with the challenges that we see for national
4608 security, and for the safety and protection of American
4609 citizens, especially our children and young adults.

4610 And we have already covered today a lot of the

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4611 information about the extensive use of the app, the number of
4612 users who are children and young adults. But I think it
4613 bears repeating, as Mr. Veasey mentioned, that TikTok is the
4614 preferred platform of young Americans, and they use it for
4615 all kinds of creative and important things. And we have seen
4616 that. But there are also some dangerous things that we know
4617 it has and continues to be used for, and that -- also that
4618 the data that is collected is posing additional dangers. And
4619 that is what we are here for.

4620 Most people using TikTok do not realize that TikTok is
4621 collecting data about their keystrokes, or about their
4622 browsing history on other sites, and so much more. And I
4623 agree with my colleagues that we need a comprehensive set of
4624 data privacy laws here in the country, and we have heard some
4625 very good ideas today.

4626 Mr. Chew, you have mentioned several times today that
4627 these are industry-wide issues, and I agree with you that
4628 there are industry-wide challenges here. But there are also
4629 some specific things relating to TikTok that I want to focus
4630 my questions on, and really want to understand where there is
4631 a difference, and how we can craft legislation that addresses

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4632 the very real challenges that we have been hearing about
4633 today.

4634 As you know, states across the country have joined an
4635 ongoing investigation into possible violations of consumer
4636 protection laws by TikTok as they pertain to TikTok's effect
4637 on the mental health of American children and teenagers. As
4638 part of this investigation, states have requested to review
4639 internal TikTok communications that takes place on Lark.
4640 That is TikTok's primary instant messaging system. Is that
4641 right?

4642 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

4643 *Mrs. Fletcher. Okay. And does every TikTok employee
4644 have a Lark account?

4645 *Mr. Chew. It is very similar to companies that use
4646 Slack or any other instant messaging tool.

4647 *Mrs. Fletcher. But Lark is a proprietary instant
4648 messaging tool. It is not Slack.

4649 *Mr. Chew. It is something that was developed, yes, by
4650 ByteDance.

4651 *Mrs. Fletcher. And it was developed by TikTok?

4652 *Mr. Chew. No, it was developed by ByteDance.

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4653 *Mrs. Fletcher. It is developed by ByteDance. Okay.

4654 And so a couple of questions stemming from that.

4655 Is it true that Lark videoconferencing has a translation
4656 feature in which Chinese is translated to English text and
4657 vice versa?

4658 *Mr. Chew. That is correct. It helps with global
4659 cooperation.

4660 *Mrs. Fletcher. Okay, and those translated
4661 conversations are somehow saved into the Lark system?

4662 *Mr. Chew. I would need to get back to you on the
4663 specifics. There is a -- you know, I will get back to you on
4664 the specifics.

4665 *Mrs. Fletcher. Okay. That would be great to know.
4666 And I neglected to ask, but does every TikTok employee have a
4667 Lark account?

4668 *Mr. Chew. Yes, I believe so. Yes.

4669 *Mrs. Fletcher. Including you, do you have one?

4670 *Mr. Chew. Yes, I believe so, yes.

4671 *Mrs. Fletcher. And then do you have a -- there is some
4672 kind of profile for your instant messaging system so every
4673 employee identifies their manager, and their department, who

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4674 they work for, what they do. Is that all included in their
4675 Lark profile, do you know?

4676 *Mr. Chew. It is very common for companies to have
4677 enterprise messaging tools that --

4678 *Mrs. Fletcher. Sure.

4679 *Mr. Chew. -- companies use.

4680 *Mrs. Fletcher. It does. And I guess I am asking
4681 specifically about Lark, since it is specific to TikTok,
4682 whether it includes information like identifying who, for
4683 example, your manager is. Do you know whether that is
4684 something that is identified in Lark?

4685 *Mr. Chew. Yes. Again, some of these HR features are
4686 built into a lot of enterprise tools that we use. And --
4687 yes.

4688 *Mrs. Fletcher. So, like, for your own profile, does it
4689 identify who your manager is?

4690 *Mr. Chew. Yes, it does.

4691 *Mrs. Fletcher. And who does it identify as your
4692 manager?

4693 *Mr. Chew. I report to the CEO of ByteDance.

4694 *Mrs. Fletcher. Okay. And so that is Zhang Yiming. Is

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4695 that identified as your manager? That is the former CEO.

4696 *Mr. Chew. He has stepped down from the board. And --

4697 *Mrs. Fletcher. Okay, so --

4698 *Mr. Chew. That is the CEO, yes.

4699 *Mrs. Fletcher. Okay. So Mr. Rubo is identified now as
4700 your manager on --

4701 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

4702 *Mrs. Fletcher. -- the system? Okay. And as you
4703 mentioned, it was developed by ByteDance. So it is not just
4704 used by TikTok employees, it is also used by ByteDance
4705 employees, is that right?

4706 *Mr. Chew. Also by other companies now. I think Lark
4707 is selling it, and it is a good tool for instant messaging.

4708 *Mrs. Fletcher. So Lark is available to third parties
4709 outside of the ByteDance system, as well, like Slack?

4710 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

4711 *Mrs. Fletcher. And do you personally ever use Lark to
4712 communicate with ByteDance?

4713 *Mr. Chew. With employees at ByteDance? Yes, I do.

4714 *Mrs. Fletcher. You do? Okay. Well, I am running out
4715 of time, and I am sorry to say, because this is really

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

4716 interesting. I do think it underscores some of the concerns
4717 that have been raised in this hearing. So I think it is
4718 clear we have work we need to continue to do here in the
4719 Congress to address data protection and privacy.

4720 And with that, Madam Chairwoman, I thank you, and I will
4721 yield back.

4722 *The Chair. The gentlelady yields back. The committee
4723 stands in recess, and we will reconvene immediately following
4724 the third vote being called.

4725 [Recess.]

4726 *The Chair. The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Weber is
4727 recognized for five minutes.

4728 *Mr. Weber. Thank you, Madam Chair and, Mr. Chew,
4729 thanks for being here.

4730 Mr. Chew, I am one of six Texans on this committee. I
4731 am over here. So when you invoke the name of Texas, you get
4732 my attention.

4733 Mr. Chew, when you were the CFO of ByteDance, did the
4734 Chinese Government instruct you on how content was to be
4735 moderated on Douyin or TikTok, yes or no?

4736 *Mr. Chew. Sorry, Congressman, would you mind repeating

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4737 that question?

4738 *Mr. Weber. When you were the CFO of ByteDance, did the
4739 Chinese Government instruct you on how content to be
4740 moderated -- was to be moderated on Douyin or TikTok?

4741 *Mr. Chew. I was not in charge of that. That is the
4742 CFO of --

4743 *Mr. Weber. You were not?

4744 *Mr. Chew. -- of ByteDance.

4745 *Mr. Weber. Okay, we have a discrepancy there.

4746 Reports have shown that TikTok accounts managed by media
4747 links to be a propaganda arm of the CCP, pushed divisive
4748 content before the recent midterm election. Mr. Chew, yes or
4749 no, has -- to your knowledge, has the CCP coordinated or
4750 utilized TikTok to influence users through algorithms, state-
4751 paid content creation, or in any other capacity?

4752 *Mr. Chew. No, they do not do that. We do not promote
4753 or remove any content on behalf of the Chinese Government.

4754 *Mr. Weber. You don't, but did the Chinese Government?
4755 Do you have any knowledge of that?

4756 *Mr. Chew. We do not do -- Congressman, we have only
4757 one process of removing content on our platform --

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4758 *Mr. Weber. Okay.

4759 *Mr. Chew. -- and the process is done by our content
4760 moderation team headquartered in Ireland, in Dublin -- sorry,
4761 Ireland and the U.S. And we will only remove content if it
4762 violates our guidelines. And that is something that we
4763 audit, you know, or if there is a valid legal order. So --

4764 *Mr. Weber. Okay. Several reports, hearings, and
4765 leaked internal documents have indicated that TikTok has
4766 repeatedly censored or de-amplified content that is critical
4767 of the Chinese Communist Party's party policies in the U.S.
4768 and abroad. Are you aware of those reports?

4769 *Mr. Chew. I don't think that is accurate, Congressman.
4770 I do not --

4771 *Mr. Weber. Are you aware of those reports?

4772 *Mr. Chew. There could be some reports that say that,
4773 but that action itself is not something --

4774 *Mr. Weber. But your testimony here today is that you
4775 can keep up with stuff and make it as "clean as possible."'
4776 Are you aware of those reports?

4777 *Mr. Chew. I want to make it very clear that we --
4778 there is content on TikTok that is great and fun. There is

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4779 content that is critical of China, and --

4780 *Mr. Weber. That is not what I am saying. Are you
4781 aware of the reports citing that fact?

4782 *Mr. Chew. Again, like I said, the fact is if you go
4783 onto our platform, you will find content that is critical of
4784 China.

4785 *Mr. Weber. Well, we are going to talk about that.
4786 Now, this committee is looking at reforming section 230 of
4787 the Communications Decency Act, which has already been
4788 mentioned here today. Do you think that censoring history
4789 and -- historical facts and current events should be
4790 protected by section 230's good faith requirement?

4791 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, that is a more complex topic.
4792 I would need to speak to my team and get back to you on the
4793 specifics.

4794 *Mr. Weber. Is your team behind you?

4795 *Mr. Chew. It is my broader team. I will speak to them
4796 and I will get back to you.

4797 *Mr. Weber. It is always good to have folks behind you,
4798 isn't it?

4799 *Mr. Chew. Not them.

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4800 *Mr. Weber. Oh, no? Okay, I got you.

4801 Here are my concerns with TikTok. Your claims are hard
4802 to believe. It is no secret to us that TikTok is still under
4803 the thumb of CCP influence. And let's be honest, TikTok is
4804 indoctrinating our children with divisive, woke, and pro-CCP
4805 propaganda, all while threatening our national security with
4806 Chinese spyware.

4807 In fact -- let me look at my notes here -- you had an
4808 exchange with Anna Eshoo. In your exchange with
4809 Congresswoman Eshoo you said that "extreme fitness videos
4810 shouldn't be viewed too much," do you remember that exchange
4811 here today?

4812 *Mr. Chew. What extremist videos?

4813 *Mr. Weber. With Anna Eshoo out of California.

4814 *Mr. Chew. I -- any content that is -- has extremist
4815 content --

4816 *Mr. Weber. Okay.

4817 *Mr. Chew. -- is not allowed on our platform. It will
4818 be -- we identify them, and we --

4819 *Mr. Weber. Was that also true about the gun video that
4820 you saw today? Was that extreme content that should have

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4821 been taken down?

4822 *Mr. Chew. I would need to look at the specifics of the
4823 whole video. There was a bit of lag just now. We couldn't
4824 see the whole video.

4825 *Mr. Weber. Okay. You know it threatened our committee
4826 chair here?

4827 *Mr. Chew. That is unacceptable.

4828 *Mr. Weber. Okay.

4829 *Mr. Chew. And, you know --

4830 *Mr. Weber. So you are aware of that extreme video.
4831 And why did it take 40-plus days to get it down? Does it
4832 take literally an act of Congress? Should we plan to have a
4833 committee hearing every time, every day, every time there is
4834 something brought up, so that we can limit the content on
4835 TikTok? Should Congress plan to do that, Mr. Chew?

4836 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, we work very hard to remove
4837 violative content on our platform.

4838 *Mr. Weber. Okay. Well, let me move on. With
4839 Congressman Hudson, he asked you about your wages and your
4840 stocks, and you said you would prefer to keep that
4841 information private. Now you know how we feel about American

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4842 public's information. We prefer to keep it private, as well,
4843 and we don't think TikTok does that.

4844 So, Madam Chair, my time is up. And if this committee
4845 gets its way, TikTok's time is up.

4846 *Mr. Chew. Madam Chair, if I may --

4847 *The Chair. The gentleman --

4848 *Mr. Chew. -- in my response to an earlier question --

4849 *The Chair. The gentleman -- I am sorry, the
4850 gentleman's time has expired, or -- yes, I -- the chair
4851 recognizes Mr. Ruiz from California for five minutes.

4852 *Mr. Ruiz. Thank you, Chair Rodgers. I echo my
4853 colleagues' concerns about TikTok's impacts on the health and
4854 well-being of the American public.

4855 As a doctor and the ranking member of the Select
4856 Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic, I am troubled that
4857 TikTok is rife with medically inaccurate information,
4858 including dangerous misinformation and the intentional
4859 disinformation about COVID-19 and vaccines. TikTok's
4860 community guidelines state that the company will remove
4861 content or accounts that involve "misleading information that
4862 causes significant harm." However, since the early stages

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4863 of the pandemic, TikTok has been used as a platform for
4864 people pushing misinformation, disinformation, including by
4865 those casting doubt on the safety and efficacy of lifesaving
4866 vaccines.

4867 And despite TikTok's pledge to address harmful
4868 misinformation, these videos are being viewed millions of
4869 times. For example, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue
4870 found that a sample of 124 TikTok videos containing vaccine
4871 misinformation were viewed 20 million times. And Media
4872 Matters found that a sample of 18 videos with COVID-19
4873 misinformation were viewed over 57 million times.

4874 Here is another shocking study: the Journal of American
4875 Medical Informatics Association found that, when searching
4876 "#coronavirus" on TikTok, almost 30 percent of the videos
4877 that came up contained misinformation. Videos in that sample
4878 containing a high level of misinformation were viewed a
4879 median of 9.4 million times.

4880 Mr. Chew, what are these -- why are these dangerous
4881 videos falling through the cracks of your company's efforts
4882 to enforce its own community guidelines and remove harmful
4883 misinformation?

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4884 *Mr. Chew. Before I answer that, in my response to an
4885 earlier --

4886 *Mr. Ruiz. No, no, you are --

4887 *Mr. Chew. -- question from Representative Dunn --

4888 *Mr. Ruiz. You are in my -- Mr. Chew you are in my
4889 time. Answer my question.

4890 *Mr. Chew. I understand. But if -- I would like to
4891 clarify something.

4892 *Mr. Ruiz. I have five minutes.

4893 *Mr. Chew. Okay.

4894 *Mr. Ruiz. In my time. You are in my time now. Answer
4895 my question.

4896 *Mr. Chew. Yes. Any dangerous misinformation is -- we
4897 partner with third-party experts to be able to identify and
4898 help us with subject domain expertise, and with the expertise
4899 that we recognize we rely on those to develop policies that
4900 recognize and remove content that could be --

4901 *Mr. Ruiz. Well, your efforts are -- have failed, and
4902 they are dangerous. Okay? It is public health risks that --
4903 you are putting millions of people's lives at risk for not
4904 being able to do a better job.

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4905 And I am concerned that TikTok's features make it --
4906 users uniquely vulnerable to the spread of this
4907 misinformation. For example, TikTok makes it extremely easy
4908 to reuse audio and videos to create content, which allows
4909 misinformation to quickly spread through the platform and
4910 TikTok's algorithm. To recommend videos means that a user
4911 viewing one video containing misinformation can easily result
4912 in their For You page becoming filled with videos containing
4913 similar misinformation. This is a dangerous feedback loop.

4914 So is TikTok taking any action to modify these features
4915 so that they no longer facilitate the spread of this
4916 misinformation or this misinformation feedback loop?

4917 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, again, like I said, any
4918 dangerous mis or disinformation we work with third parties to
4919 recognize that, and it is proactively removed from our
4920 platform.

4921 *Mr. Ruiz. Okay, so --

4922 *Mr. Chew. So it doesn't get into those loops at all.

4923 *Mr. Ruiz. So I can go back and read you the data and
4924 the Journal of American Medical Informatics: 30 percent of
4925 videos after searching for #coronavirus had misinformation.

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4926 Like, almost one out of three. Your third party and your
4927 company are missing one -- almost one out of three
4928 misinformed videos. So you are telling me what you are
4929 doing; I am telling you the data shows that you are grossly
4930 failing at that effort.

4931 The other thing, the other question I have for you is
4932 that TikTok is also in Spanish, and Spanish-speaking
4933 populations have been specifically targeted to misinformation
4934 when it comes to many aspects, especially medical
4935 misinformation. And as chair of the Congressional Hispanic
4936 Caucus, we reached out to you last Congress on this issue.

4937 So what is your intent, or how does your team look like
4938 to address Spanish versus English?

4939 How many staff do you have focusing on Spanish versus
4940 how many staff do you have focusing on English
4941 misinformation?

4942 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I was -- like I had explained
4943 just now, the Spanish-speaking population is very important
4944 to our platform. We do have a lot of Spanish-speaking
4945 moderators, and we will continue to --

4946 *Mr. Ruiz. So how many Spanish-speaking staff versus

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4947 English-speaking staff for misinformation do you have?

4948 *Mr. Chew. I can get back to you on the specifics, but
4949 dangerous misinformation is moderated, regardless of
4950 language.

4951 *Mr. Ruiz. Not to the degree that it needs to be.

4952 *Mr. Chew. We are -- we can continue to work hard to --

4953 *Mr. Ruiz. And when there is misinformation, people
4954 base their decisions that often times put them at risk, and
4955 exposures, and their families at risk. And with the
4956 coronavirus, especially prior to the vaccines, they -- the
4957 risk was their life.

4958 Thank you, I yield back.

4959 *Mr. Chew. Madam Chair, I would like to clarify
4960 something. In the follow-up question to Representative
4961 Dunn's question just now, I misunderstood the follow-up about
4962 ByteDance buying on behalf of the Chinese Government. My
4963 answer to that question should be a no, because it came very
4964 rapidly. I just want to clarify that.

4965 *The Chair. The gentleman's time has expired. The
4966 gentleman -- or the chair, the chair recognizes the gentleman
4967 from Idaho, Mr. Fulcher, for five minutes.

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4968 *Mr. Fulcher. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

4969 Mr. Chew, we have been going a long time here by now,
4970 and a lot of questions have been answered, and a lot of them
4971 have not been answered. And the primary thing I want to do
4972 is just share some thoughts of what I have seen, learned
4973 today, been exposed to.

4974 First of all, I have got to compliment you on having a
4975 product that is impressive. It is a very influential tool.
4976 It is addictive. And that is what you want users to be
4977 exposed to, something addictive. And it is a data-gathering
4978 masterpiece. So clearly, it has got the potential to sell
4979 products, connected like-minded people with that artificial
4980 intelligence capability in a viral, viral fashion, and
4981 perhaps spread information quicker, better than anything else
4982 that has been developed out there.

4983 Now, I am just going to tell you, I am not a subscriber,
4984 at least a willing subscriber. But probably in that database
4985 somewhere is my preferences with colors, or foods, or who I
4986 have spoken to, or what I have said, my favorite newspapers,
4987 I don't know. But that is available to be sold or given to
4988 whomever or whatever. And the whatever is what bothers me.

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4989 And I will use myself as an example again. If for
4990 whatever reason I became a target in this, I became somebody
4991 you didn't like -- and I know that would be hard to believe,
4992 because you have got to like me -- but let's say you didn't,
4993 or your company didn't. Or for whatever reason, I became an
4994 app target. That artificial intelligence algorithm could be
4995 shared or spread selectively to a targeted audience that --
4996 with negative information that maybe they -- has been paired
4997 up with that knowledge and that app to make me look really,
4998 really bad. Or to the converse, the same thing could be done
4999 to make me look really, really good.

5000 Here is the problem. It is someone else or some
5001 artificial intelligence algorithm that has inordinate power
5002 to subjectively combine strategic data with strategic
5003 audiences to shape whatever thoughts and news they want. And
5004 I have equipped it, not even knowing it. And that process
5005 could apply to anyone or anything. There is the danger. It
5006 could be the President of the United States, it could be
5007 their kids, it could be a company, it could be a political
5008 party, it could be a news outlet. Anything could be targeted
5009 for that selective viral spread of just some information.

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5010 Mr. Chew, this may be genius, but that doesn't make it
5011 fair, it doesn't make it good, and it doesn't make it
5012 accountable. I wouldn't want my government to have that
5013 ability. I wouldn't want a company or a political party or
5014 my friend August here, or my mother to have that capability.
5015 And I certainly don't want that to be accessible to anyone in
5016 China.

5017 Now, there is no question it has got immense value. And
5018 as proof that, you are here, because this hasn't been a fun
5019 day. I know that. It hasn't been a fun day for us, either.

5020 Artificial intelligence is difficult to manage once it
5021 is on auto cruise control. And it is, as we have talked
5022 about, nearly impossible to wall off data. I know the idea,
5023 I know a little bit about databases, I know a little bit
5024 about corruption of those databases. It is very difficult to
5025 wall things off.

5026 And unfortunately, there is this thing called human
5027 nature, where there is some dark components from time to
5028 time. There is always a temptation to monetize things, or
5029 perhaps use some of these tools for nefarious purposes, and
5030 they can have absolutely devastating consequences.

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5031 So, Mr. Chew, I am going to wrap up my comments and just
5032 say that this is so attractive. TikTok poses as a Mr.
5033 Rogers' neighborhood, but it acts like Big Brother. And that
5034 has got to stop.

5035 Madam Chair, I yield back.

5036 *Mr. Griffith. Will the gentleman yield?

5037 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. Oh --

5038 *Mr. Griffith. Will the gentleman yield?

5039 *Mr. Fulcher. The gentleman yields.

5040 *The Chair. I yield to Mr. Morgan Griffith.

5041 *Mr. Griffith. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

5042 Mr. Chew, earlier we had submitted into evidence the
5043 TikTok, ByteDance, and their ties to the Chinese Communist
5044 Party report that was filed as an exhibit last week with the
5045 Senate in Australia.

5046 If you have any comment, I would like to get it on this
5047 paragraph out of their summary: "Our research confirms
5048 beyond any plausible doubt that TikTok is owned by ByteDance.
5049 ByteDance is a PRC company, and ByteDance is subject to all
5050 the influence, guidance, and de facto control to which the
5051 Chinese Communist Party now subjects all PRC technology

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5052 companies. We show' ` -- in this report -- "how the CCP and
5053 the PRC state agencies together,' ` the party state, "have
5054 extended their ties into ByteDance to the point that the
5055 company can no longer be accurately described as a private
5056 enterprise.' `

5057 You keep calling it a private enterprise, but all the
5058 countries in the world are saying it is not a private
5059 enterprise, it is part of the Chinese Communist Party. What
5060 say you, sir? Yes or no, is it part of the Chinese Communist
5061 Party, as everybody thinks, or are you still living in some
5062 mystical world?

5063 *Mr. Chew. I disagree with many conclusions --

5064 *Mr. Griffith. So you are living in the mystical world.
5065 I yield back.

5066 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
5067 recognizes Ms. -- the lady -- gentlelady from Minnesota, Ms.
5068 Craig, for five minutes.

5069 *Ms. Craig. Well, thank you so much, Madam Chair, for
5070 yielding.

5071 Mr. Chew, I am probably like a lot of parents who are
5072 also Members of Congress out here. I know a number of us --

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5073 when you testified earlier today, you mentioned that the
5074 over-35 segment was a growing group of potential users, as if
5075 over 35 is old. And I realize that my own children think
5076 that I am ancient, our four boys.

5077 But like a lot of us up here, we understand that there
5078 is some potential good. And of course, many of your
5079 influencers are doing what they are doing for all the right
5080 reasons. But one thing in your testimony you said a lot was
5081 "safety." But as a mother, and as a Member of Congress, and
5082 as someone who is very concerned about drug use in our
5083 country, I was surprised that that didn't come up once in
5084 your testimony. No real reference to it here today. You
5085 know, I have raised my concerns in general about social media
5086 platforms serving as an illegal marketplace for drugs in
5087 prior Big Tech hearings. And I plan to continue that focus
5088 during today's hearing.

5089 Mr. Chew, a March 8th, 2023 article in the Washington
5090 Post detailed the fact that TikTok has made little progress
5091 in combating the sale of illegal drugs on your platform. In
5092 fact, Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser said that getting
5093 drugs on platforms like yours was nearly as convenient as

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5094 using a phone to order a pizza or call an Uber. That same
5095 article mentions that law enforcement agencies have been
5096 frustrated by TikTok's lack of competition in the form of
5097 data sharing.

5098 In my view, TikTok has taken little action in response
5099 to this crisis. According to a May 2022 blog post from
5100 TikTok, you donated \$125,000 or 0.001 percent of your 2022
5101 revenue to an anti-drug effort on your platform in the form
5102 of ad credits. You also redirected #drugs, #fentanyl, and
5103 other obvious hashtags away from posts selling drugs to a
5104 community resources page, as if a teenager looking for drugs
5105 is going to look for them at #drugs.

5106 Drug dealers have easily worked their way around this,
5107 using emojis and slang to communicate that they have drugs
5108 for sale. To this day it is possible for anyone to log into
5109 your platform and acquire drugs, and the consequences of that
5110 can be fatal.

5111 What are you doing to move past these token efforts to
5112 prevent teenagers from accessing drugs on your platform?

5113 Look, as parents up here today we not -- we may not
5114 understand everything about your platform. I am not a tech

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5115 guru. Many of us up here may not use exactly the right
5116 language, but we know when our kids are at risk. And our
5117 kids are at risk on your platform. So what are you going to
5118 do to move past these previous token efforts?

5119 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, we do take illegal drugs
5120 content on our platform very seriously. It violates our
5121 guidelines. We proactively identify and remove them. And as
5122 you pointed out, if anybody searches for any drugs on our
5123 platform, we do point them to resources to help them with
5124 that.

5125 At the same time, we have also taken product changes.
5126 Like, for example, we don't allow our under-16 users to use
5127 the right messaging. And the reason is because, you know, we
5128 wanted to -- that was a trade-off here. And we believe that,
5129 you know, it will protect these younger users better from
5130 getting contacts from people trying to push illegal activity.

5131 So we will continue to work on it. Again, no company
5132 can be perfect at this. We are not saying we are --

5133 *Ms. Craig. Mr. Chew, I -- with all due respect, the
5134 "no company can be perfect" line has been used way too much
5135 today.

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5136 I am going to reclaim my time. You know, clearly, in
5137 the three-plus hours you have been before us today, what you
5138 are saying about Project Texas just doesn't pass the smell
5139 test. My constituents are concerned that TikTok and the
5140 Chinese Communist Party are controlling their data and seeing
5141 our own vulnerabilities.

5142 If you are an American company, we could look at your
5143 10-K, we could see who your shareholders are. The answer you
5144 provided earlier today, you would rather not tell us what
5145 your compensation is, or how it is derived? Well, no
5146 American CEO would like to tell us that, but they have to,
5147 because they are an American company. So what you are doing
5148 down in Texas, it is all well and good, but it is not enough
5149 for us to be convinced that our privacy is not at risk.

5150 So how can you say that you are protecting American
5151 users' privacy with the CCP being so heavily involved with
5152 ByteDance? It is not possible. China won't even carry your
5153 product. How is it that you can convince us that our privacy
5154 is not at risk and, more than that, our kids' privacy is not
5155 at risk in this country?

5156 *Mr. Chew. In my opening statement --

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5157 *The Chair. The gentlelady's time has expired.

5158 *Ms. Craig. Thank you, Madam Chair.

5159 *The Chair. The gentlelady's time has expired. We are
5160 going to have to continue on. The gentleman from Georgia,
5161 Mr. Allen, is recognized for five minutes.

5162 *Mr. Allen. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Mr.
5163 Chew, for being here today.

5164 In September 2021 the Wall Street Journal published an
5165 article titled, "How TikTok Serves Up Sex and Drug Videos to
5166 Minors.'" This article gives a chilling depiction of the
5167 types of content that TikTok's algorithm is curating for our
5168 children. This article claims that your application served
5169 an account that was registered as a 13-year-old "videos about
5170 drug use'" referenced -- it referenced to cocaine and meth
5171 addiction, and promotional videos for online sales of drugs.

5172 The algorithm was also found to have delivered countless
5173 videos depicting "pornography and other adult content'" to
5174 the device of an account that was registered as a 13-year-
5175 old.

5176 Could you please explain to the members of this
5177 committee and parents across the country why your company

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5178 deems it acceptable for such inappropriate content to be
5179 prominently featured on a child's For You page?

5180 *Mr. Chew. The -- a lot of the content that you
5181 mentioned, Congressman, are violative of our own policies.
5182 And we don't think they are acceptable, and we remove them
5183 when we identify them. We take this very seriously. I
5184 mentioned this.

5185 This is an industry-wide challenge. We are investing as
5186 much as we can. We don't think it represents the majority of
5187 the users' experience on TikTok, but it does happen. Some
5188 bad actors try and come in and post some of this content, and
5189 we are doing our best to invest as much as we can to remove
5190 them.

5191 *Mr. Allen. Well, I would say you are not doing enough.
5192 I have 14 grandchildren, Mr. Chew. Do you personally
5193 believe that such content is appropriate for minor children
5194 to consume?

5195 *Mr. Chew. A lot of the content that you mentioned,
5196 like porn, for example, is not allowed on our platform. So
5197 no, I do not think they are acceptable for young people to
5198 consume.

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5199 *Mr. Allen. Earlier this week the Wall Street Journal
5200 published an article titled, "TikTok's Chinese Partner Has
5201 Another Wildly Popular App in the U.S.'" This app is called
5202 CapCut. It is a video editing tool to help users go viral on
5203 TikTok. While for obvious reasons most of our attention is
5204 focused on TikTok and ByteDance, other companies and their
5205 applications are also continuing to exploit the privacy of
5206 Americans. TikTok, Capcut, Lark, FaceU, all of these apps
5207 are also controlled by ByteDance, and pose serious privacy
5208 concerns.

5209 In 2022 it was reported that TopBuzz, an international
5210 version of ByteDance-censored Chinese news app was used to
5211 spread pro-China messages to Americans. When it comes to the
5212 data privacy of Americans, we must have a clear set of
5213 guidelines to ensure Americans' data is protected and not
5214 passed along to unknown third-party actors who could pose a
5215 threat to our security.

5216 I urge my colleagues to continue to work together to
5217 pass a national data privacy bill, not just one out of the
5218 House Energy and Commerce Committee, but also through the
5219 House of this Congress. It is the only systematic way we can

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5220 address privacy concerns. Unfortunately, I have been given
5221 no reason to believe that TikTok does not pose a threat, and
5222 cannot be trusted to follow our laws when they conflict with
5223 the desires of the Chinese Communist Party.

5224 Your firewall that you are talking about, if you had a
5225 bad actor in your -- what you call your Texas initiative --
5226 could get through that firewall and send any information that
5227 they wanted to send anywhere direct to the -- into --
5228 directly to the Chinese Communist Party, would you deny that?

5229 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, this risk that you talk about
5230 exists for every company. Bad actors --

5231 *Mr. Allen. I am talking about TikTok, sir.

5232 *Mr. Chew. In fact, the risk is lower for us, because
5233 these --

5234 *Mr. Allen. It is a risk, correct?

5235 *Mr. Chew. The personnel will be vetted.

5236 *Mr. Allen. Yes.

5237 *Mr. Chew. So the risk is actually lower than most
5238 companies in the industry.

5239 *Mr. Allen. Well, that is why we have to deal with your
5240 company.

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5241 And with that, Madam Chair, I yield back.

5242 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The chair
5243 recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Peters, for
5244 five minutes.

5245 *Mr. Peters. Thank you, Madam Chair.

5246 Mr. Chew, thanks for being here today. You know, your
5247 testimony discusses an effort your company has named Project
5248 Texas, and the investments your company has made in creating
5249 a firewall between the United States user data and entities
5250 in China susceptible to influence by China's government.

5251 And with your company's recent announcement by CFIUS --
5252 that CFIUS has instructed TikTok to separate itself from
5253 ByteDance or face a ban, TikTok's commitment to retaining
5254 this firewall is at a crossroads. So I want to ask you some
5255 questions about your company's long-term plans to ensure the
5256 safety and security of American data. And this, for me, is
5257 the crux of the concern for me about TikTok.

5258 First of all, does the Chinese Government need to
5259 approve Project Texas for TikTok to agree to it?

5260 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, we have designed Project Texas
5261 to move forward in the United States. This is something that

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5262 we have described at length in the written testimony and in
5263 my opening statement: the firewall of American data stored
5264 on American soil by an American company overseen by American
5265 personnel. This is designed to move forward in the United
5266 States.

5267 *Mr. Peters. But does the Chinese Government need to
5268 approve Project Texas for you to agree to it?

5269 *Mr. Chew. We do not believe so.

5270 *Mr. Peters. How is TikTok considering the future of
5271 Project Texas in the event of a sale or other ownership
5272 changes?

5273 Are there elements of the Project Texas that TikTok
5274 would change prior to, or --

5275 *Mr. Chew. I cannot speak on this hypothetical or on,
5276 you know, on potential, you know, owners who would -- I
5277 cannot represent.

5278 *Mr. Peters. Okay. You don't know.

5279 *Mr. Chew. I don't know, yes.

5280 *Mr. Peters. Despite Project Texas's planned positive
5281 changes, it does include several broad exceptions that would
5282 allow large amounts of U.S. user data to routinely leave the

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5283 country. I want to know a little bit more about these
5284 exceptions so I can understand whether Project Texas can live
5285 to -- live up to its promise of protecting Americans' user
5286 data.

5287 I understand that, under Project Texas, business data
5288 and public data will be permitted to regularly leave the
5289 United States. Is that correct?

5290 *Mr. Chew. Almost all the data is under the -- that is
5291 not public is under the definition of protected data. This
5292 accepted data that you mentioned -- I can get back to your
5293 team on this -- is really for interoperability purposes, to
5294 make sure that the business can still operate and American
5295 users are still getting the benefit --

5296 *Mr. Peters. Can you tell us what data -- where the
5297 data goes, and how it is used by the company?

5298 *Mr. Chew. It will travel outside of the United States,
5299 but I can get back to you on the specifics.

5300 *Mr. Peters. Okay.

5301 *Mr. Chew. It is data that doesn't -- it cannot be used
5302 to identify users, you know, so it really is data that
5303 ensures the interoperability of the platform.

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5304 *Mr. Peters. And I understand that. I think we would
5305 want to have some understanding of how we would distinguish
5306 that by definition, and then also how it would be enforced.

5307 *Mr. Chew. I can get back to you on those specifics.

5308 *Mr. Peters. How is the U.S. data used to promote
5309 certain content back in the United States market, for
5310 instance?

5311 *Mr. Chew. I am sorry?

5312 *Mr. Peters. So what -- you have -- U.S. data feed the
5313 -- all right.

5314 How -- when you discuss where the data goes and how it
5315 is used by the company, how and at what points of data
5316 transfer does the U.S. data feed the PRC-developed algorithm
5317 used by TikTok?

5318 How would the data that you are talking about --

5319 *Mr. Chew. We -- TikTok does not -- is not available in
5320 mainland China.

5321 *Mr. Peters. The PRC-developed algorithm used by
5322 TikTok, how does U.S. data get fed by that?

5323 *Mr. Chew. The U.S. -- the algorithm that leads to the
5324 U.S. app is in the Oracle Cloud infrastructure, and is

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5325 trained by U.S. and global data. Again, TikTok does not --
5326 is not available in mainland China.

5327 *Mr. Peters. How can we trust that these exceptions for
5328 Project Texas won't be used abused by China's government or
5329 by foreign adversaries?

5330 *Mr. Chew. We can -- we -- this is the fourth
5331 commitment, transparency, third-party monitors, including the
5332 definitions of these exceptions. And, you know, we can be
5333 very transparent on how they are used.

5334 *Mr. Peters. Okay. I guess my question will be, then
5335 -- and if you want to get back to me in writing, that is
5336 fine, but how we would distinguish between the data for
5337 interoperability that you suggest needs to be shared with
5338 what data wouldn't be shared.

5339 *Mr. Chew. It is -- again, you know, it is -- first of
5340 all, public data is not part of the protected data
5341 definition, because public data is what users want to share
5342 globally. So if you post a video, and you want someone in
5343 France to see it, just by definition it has to leave the
5344 United States. Otherwise, the world cannot see it.

5345 Now, there are certain aggregated and anonymized data

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5346 sets that is useful for interoperability, for advertising,
5347 for example.

5348 *Mr. Peters. Right.

5349 *Mr. Chew. And that is part of what we are talking
5350 about.

5351 *Mr. Peters. Right.

5352 *Mr. Chew. I can get back to you on the specifics,
5353 but --

5354 *Mr. Peters. I think we would also want to know how it
5355 is anonymized, and how -- what oversight and enforcement we
5356 can count on.

5357 *Mr. Chew. Okay, I can get back to you on specifics.

5358 *Mr. Peters. Thank you.

5359 I yield back.

5360 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The gentleman
5361 from Texas, Mr. Pfluger, is recognized for five minutes.

5362 *Mr. Pfluger. Thank you, Madam Chair.

5363 Mr. Chew, I got to hand it to you. You have actually
5364 done something that in the last three to four years has not
5365 happened, except for the exception of maybe Vladimir Putin:
5366 you have unified Republicans and Democrats. And if only for

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5367 a day, we are actually unified because we have serious
5368 concerns.

5369 Do you -- does TikTok support good? I mean, is TikTok a
5370 platform for good? Just yes or no.

5371 *Mr. Chew. I believe, yes.

5372 *Mr. Pfluger. Okay. Does TikTok support freedom of
5373 speech?

5374 *Mr. Chew. Yes. It is one of the commitments I have
5375 given this committee.

5376 *Mr. Pfluger. Do you personally support the First
5377 Amendment?

5378 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I am here to talk about --

5379 *Mr. Pfluger. As the CEO of TikTok.

5380 *Mr. Chew. I am here to talk about TikTok.

5381 *Mr. Pfluger. As the CEO of TikTok, do you support
5382 the --

5383 *Mr. Chew. TikTok supports freedom of --

5384 *Mr. Pfluger. Thank you. Does TikTok support genocide?

5385 *Mr. Chew. Again, Congressman, I am here to talk about
5386 TikTok.

5387 *Mr. Pfluger. Does TikTok support genocide? Does

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5388 TikTok --

5389 *Mr. Chew. No, but --

5390 *Mr. Pfluger. Okay.

5391 *Mr. Chew. But --

5392 *Mr. Pfluger. So -- reclaiming my time, I am going to
5393 go to a video now, and it is from Enes Kanter Freedom. And I
5394 would like you to see Enes Kanter Freedom, who has spent his
5395 entire career post-NBA fighting against human rights
5396 violations within the Chinese Communist Party.

5397 Go ahead and play this video, which highlights a
5398 situation that allegedly shows some human rights violations
5399 inside China. Please play.

5400 [Video shown.]

5401 *Mr. Pfluger. Mr. Chew, this was a video that was
5402 posted on TikTok by Enes Kanter Freedom. Are you familiar
5403 with this basketball player?

5404 *Mr. Chew. I am not familiar with the specifics of
5405 this --

5406 *Mr. Pfluger. Are you --

5407 *Mr. Chew. -- but I can tell you that --

5408 *Mr. Pfluger. Are you familiar with the player Enes

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5409 Kanter Freedom?

5410 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I am not --

5411 *Mr. Pfluger. Okay.

5412 *Mr. Chew. -- familiar with this. You have -- you just
5413 have to open TikTok and just search for this kind of content.

5414 *Mr. Pfluger. Okay.

5415 *Mr. Chew. It really exists.

5416 *Mr. Pfluger. I have read the moderation policy. Let
5417 me just quote what -- you have talked about content
5418 moderation. TikTok has a moderation policy. Yes?

5419 *Mr. Chew. We do have community guidelines that --

5420 *Mr. Pfluger. One of the guidelines says, "material
5421 that in the sole judgment of TikTok is objectionable.'" Is
5422 this an example banning Enes Kanter Freedom? Is that an
5423 example of objectionable material inside the Chinese
5424 Communist Party in mainland China?

5425 *Mr. Chew. We do not take down content simply because
5426 it is critical of China.

5427 *Mr. Pfluger. He was banned one week after this video.

5428 *Mr. Chew. We do not do that. And I can check about
5429 the specific --

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5430 *Mr. Pfluger. If you need a note, go ahead.

5431 *Mr. Chew. The note says he is not banned.

5432 *Mr. Pfluger. His account was taken off one week after.

5433 *Mr. Chew. Well, we can check on the specifics.

5434 *Mr. Pfluger. We can check.

5435 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

5436 *Mr. Pfluger. So let's get to some other questions.

5437 Thank you for the slide.

5438 Your privacy policy states that you collect a great
5439 array of data: keystroke patterns, app file names and types,
5440 sometimes approximate location, GPS location. Are keystroke
5441 patterns and rhythms part of TikTok gathering -- the data
5442 that is gathered by TikTok?

5443 *Mr. Chew. If you are talking, Congressman,
5444 specifically about keystrokes, you know, keystrokes, we do
5445 not engage in keystroke logging to monitor what the users
5446 say. It is to identify bots.

5447 *Mr. Pfluger. Okay.

5448 *Mr. Chew. It is for security purposes. And this is a
5449 standard industry practice.

5450 *Mr. Pfluger. You gather a lot of data, it is safe to

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5451 say.

5452 *Mr. Chew. We don't gather -- we don't believe we
5453 gather more than any other social media company.

5454 *Mr. Pfluger. TikTok gathers a lot of data, because
5455 your value proposition, as you sat in my office and told me,
5456 was to connect people to each other around the world. You
5457 told me this in my office. So you gather data on what they
5458 like and what they don't like, and then you show them things
5459 that they don't know they like, but eventually they may. You
5460 told me this.

5461 *Mr. Chew. I think that is -- I don't think that is
5462 what I said. What I said is that we connect people together,
5463 yes.

5464 *Mr. Pfluger. Reclaiming --

5465 *Mr. Chew. And that doesn't mean that we collect more
5466 data --

5467 *Mr. Pfluger. Are you aware of any instances of TikTok
5468 distributing content from Chinese state media?

5469 *Mr. Chew. I am sorry?

5470 *Mr. Pfluger. Are you aware of any instances of TikTok
5471 distributing content from Chinese state media on the

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5472 platform?

5473 *Mr. Chew. We will label them clearly to -- for our
5474 users to understand that.

5475 *Mr. Pfluger. Do you disagree with FBI Director Wray
5476 and NSA Director Nakasone when they said that the CCP could
5477 have the capability to manipulate data and send it to the
5478 United States? Do you disagree with their statement?

5479 *Mr. Chew. Their statement says "could."'

5480 *Mr. Pfluger. So do you disagree with that?

5481 *Mr. Chew. No, I don't disagree with that.

5482 *Mr. Pfluger. Okay. So it is possible that the CCP,
5483 under the auspices of ByteDance, which is your parent
5484 company, which you get paid from, has the ability to
5485 manipulate content that is being shared with 130 million
5486 Americans. Yes?

5487 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I just want to make sure I am
5488 understanding all these questions.

5489 I don't disagree with them, that there are data risks in
5490 general. That is what I meant.

5491 *Mr. Pfluger. There is a big data risk, because --

5492 *Mr. Chew. But on us, specifically --

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5493 *Mr. Pfluger. Are there engineers located inside
5494 mainland China that work on TikTok? Not Douyin, but TikTok.

5495 *Mr. Chew. We are not the only company that has that.

5496 *Mr. Pfluger. Are there engineers inside mainland China
5497 currently working on the algorithm for TikTok --

5498 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, like I said --

5499 *Mr. Pfluger. -- as you told me in my office.

5500 *Mr. Chew. There are other companies that -- as I told
5501 you in your office, there are other companies that --

5502 *Mr. Pfluger. I am going to reclaim my time.

5503 Please rename your project. Texas is not the
5504 appropriate name. We stand for freedom and transparency, and
5505 we don't want your project.

5506 I yield back.

5507 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The gentlelady
5508 from Tennessee is recognized for five minutes, Mrs.
5509 Harshbarger.

5510 *Mrs. Harshbarger. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank
5511 you, Mr. Chew, for being here today.

5512 Both President Trump and now President Biden have backed
5513 forcing TikTok to sell to an American company. However, the

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5514 Chinese Communist Party has put export controls on algorithms
5515 ByteDance owns that power TikTok. And of course, this has
5516 created a gauntlet of regulatory hurdles in China and the
5517 U.S. that prevented the sale of TikTok.

5518 Now, as a longtime business owner, I want to tell you,
5519 Mr. Chew, that waiting until your hands are forced will only
5520 drive down the price of your app. And right now, both your
5521 hands are tied, and you are going to have to make a decision
5522 about whether you choose freedom from the CCP or you continue
5523 to be an agent of the CCP.

5524 And I will tell you why I say it that way. As a former
5525 member of Homeland Security, I point blank asked FBI Director
5526 Wray, "Is TikTok a national security threat?"`

5527 And without hesitation, sir, he looked at me and said,
5528 "Yes, Congresswoman, it is."`

5529 Now, how much data is ByteDance collecting through
5530 TikTok that is worth continuing to fight this regulatory
5531 gauntlet? You know, why not take the money and run like any
5532 other company would do?

5533 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, we built Project Texas in
5534 order to safeguard, and we listened to the concerns that have

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5535 been raised, and we are building something that is
5536 unprecedented, that no other company is offering to protect
5537 U.S. user interests. And we believe it is rigorous and
5538 robust. And, you know, we are even offering third-party
5539 transparency and monitors to come in to verify this.

5540 Frankly, I haven't heard any good reason why this
5541 doesn't work. I have heard a lot of rhetoric around this,
5542 but I haven't heard a good reason why it doesn't work.

5543 *Mrs. Harshbarger. Well --

5544 *Mr. Chew. I look forward to these conversations, by
5545 the way, with you.

5546 *Mrs. Harshbarger. Absolutely. Well, let me go down
5547 this road.

5548 When TikTok was unveiled to the public, its business
5549 model was solely based on generating revenue from
5550 advertising. Of course, ByteDance operated a separate app
5551 called Douyin for the Chinese marketplace. TikTok is
5552 embarking on becoming a so-called super app. In other words,
5553 it is a one stop shop with everything you do, as
5554 Representative Fulcher said.

5555 It is reported that TikTok's algorithms are so powerful

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5556 that owner ByteDance has begun to license it to other
5557 companies. TikTok's recommendation engine drives usage on
5558 the platform, and this leads to promises of quick exposure
5559 and fame that leads to even more people joining. And when
5560 you sign up, TikTok starts collecting data about you, your
5561 location, your gender, your age, your facial data. The user
5562 never gets to the end of the content. And that is by design.
5563 And obviously, that makes you a lot of money.

5564 Now, I know that the Chinese Communist Party is
5565 preventing ByteDance from selling TikTok due to export
5566 restrictions on the technology. And this causes me to
5567 question how are you going to power TikTok with your Oracle
5568 servers located in the U.S. with that Texas Project with
5569 ByteDance technology, if it can't leave China? How is that
5570 going to happen? I just want you to explain how it is going
5571 to happen.

5572 *Mr. Chew. Congresswoman, the way that we design this
5573 is so that any piece of software that is impactful to the
5574 code, that enters, you know, that -- some technical details
5575 around this will be reviewed by a third party or a few third-
5576 party monitors, just to make sure that we are all comfortable

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5577 with the code.

5578 I want to say this again. I don't know of any other
5579 company in my industry who is offering this level of
5580 transparency.

5581 *Mrs. Harshbarger. Well, why are there two different
5582 versions of apps, one in China and one in the United States?

5583 *Mr. Chew. It is just a different business.

5584 *Mrs. Harshbarger. Well, I think we all know the reason
5585 that the Chinese get a different version, because ByteDance
5586 puts China first and America last.

5587 And, you know, TikTok has -- with everything we have
5588 heard today, sir, when you see 13-year-olds, 16-year-olds,
5589 you see the degradation that is happening to our youth and
5590 our society, you know, it is deceptive, and it is destructive
5591 comment, and it is comments, and the worst thing is that it
5592 is deliberate, sir. And that is not acceptable.

5593 And with that, Chairwoman, I yield back.

5594 *The Chair. The gentlelady yields back. The gentlelady
5595 from Iowa, Mrs. Miller-Meeks, is recognized for five minutes.

5596 *Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I would
5597 just like to thank our witness, Mr. Chew. Having been in the

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5598 hot seat, so to speak, before, when I was in state Senate, I
5599 know how challenging this can be.

5600 And thank you for your demeanor throughout all of this.
5601 But certainly, as you can see, in a bipartisan way we have
5602 concerns, and those concerns are valid.

5603 And this is a yes-or-no question. Does TikTok track
5604 users' individual keystrokes?

5605 *Mr. Chew. Only for security purposes, for -- like, for
5606 example, like detecting bots. But we don't monitor what
5607 users say.

5608 *Mrs. Miller-Meeks. So the only purpose that you would
5609 monitor keystrokes is for security purposes.

5610 *Mr. Chew. I can get back to you on more specifics, but
5611 this is not unlike what many other companies in the industry
5612 does.

5613 *Mrs. Miller-Meeks. So the keystroke monitoring does
5614 not go beyond what common industry practice in comparison to
5615 platforms like Facebook or Instagram use.

5616 *Mr. Chew. Yes, I believe so.

5617 *Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Okay. And does TikTok keep records
5618 of users' credit cards and passwords?

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5619 *Mr. Chew. I am not aware of that. You don't need that
5620 to log in. Of course, I can get back to you on specifics if
5621 you make a transaction on an e-commerce platform.

5622 But regardless, all that U.S. data will be stored within
5623 the Project Texas firewall, you know, within the Oracle Cloud
5624 infrastructure, and overseen by American personnel.

5625 *Mrs. Miller-Meeks. So you would store credit card and
5626 password information?

5627 *Mr. Chew. I need to check on the specifics. We are
5628 launching a pilot e-commerce plan, and we are making sure
5629 that the data is very secure within the Oracle Cloud
5630 infrastructure.

5631 *Mrs. Miller-Meeks. I think you have made a point of
5632 saying that your platform is not different than other
5633 platforms on social media and, therefore, are no more
5634 responsible than Facebook or Instagram or Twitter or the
5635 other social media platforms.

5636 The concern, however, comes with where the technology is
5637 generated, and whom it is owned by. And in the case of other
5638 companies, it is generated in the U.S., under U.S.
5639 guidelines, under U.S. privacy laws with certain parameters,

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5640 versus generated through a parent company, ByteDance, which,
5641 as we know, is susceptible to the laws of the Chinese
5642 Communist Party, which has access to all of that data and
5643 information.

5644 And I understand that TikTok has just reinstated Enes
5645 Kanter's account recently.

5646 So our concern, and the question I have for you, is why
5647 would China or the Chinese Communist Party be opposed to a
5648 forced sale of TikTok?

5649 *Mr. Chew. I cannot speak on behalf of the Chinese
5650 Government.

5651 I can say that we designed Project Texas to take it
5652 forward here in the United States. And again, I believe it
5653 offers unprecedented protection for U.S. user data.

5654 *Mrs. Harshbarger. Yes, I think the problem is when
5655 there is a lack of transparency, then that leads people to
5656 believe that there is something more nefarious, and that
5657 there is in fact data that is captured, is stored, and poses
5658 a risk not only to children in the United States, but also
5659 poses a risk to national security.

5660 With that, I yield the rest of my time to my colleague,

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5661 Jay Obernolte.

5662 *Mr. Obernolte. I thank the gentlelady from Iowa for
5663 yielding.

5664 Mr. Chew, I would like to continue our discussion about
5665 Project Texas, and the technical details about what you are
5666 proposing to do. So you are migrating all storage of U.S.
5667 user data to the Oracle Cloud infrastructure, and you think
5668 that that will be done by the end of the year. Was that
5669 right?

5670 *Mr. Chew. Again, I can get back to you on the
5671 technical parts of it, the migration. Today, by default, all
5672 U.S. -- new U.S. data is stored, by default --

5673 *Mr. Obernolte. Sir, I am just using what you have said
5674 in your testimony in your opening here. So --

5675 *Mr. Chew. It is stored there by default. What I said
5676 in my testimony is I am deleting legacy data.

5677 *Mr. Obernolte. I see, okay.

5678 *Mr. Chew. This is Virginia and Singapore. That is the
5679 difference.

5680 *Mr. Obernolte. So who -- when this migration is
5681 complete, who will have access to that data?

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5682 *Mr. Chew. Right now a team called TikTok U.S. Data
5683 Security, led by American personnel, they have access to
5684 that. We have begun these operations already.

5685 *Mr. Obernolte. Okay, but the app itself has access to
5686 the data, correct?

5687 *Mr. Chew. Only through them. Any employees that have
5688 the data --

5689 *Mr. Obernolte. Oh, no. What I mean is, like, if I
5690 lose my iPhone and I reinstall the app, and I put in my
5691 username and password, my app will reconnect to the
5692 mothership and download some of that data, my settings --

5693 *Mr. Chew. That is not the way it works, no.

5694 *Mr. Obernolte. It is not?

5695 *Mr. Chew. That is not the way it works. It will go
5696 through the Oracle Cloud infrastructure, and that team --

5697 *Mr. Obernolte. No, no. Yes, I realize that. So let
5698 me ask you this: What would prevent them, someone with
5699 detailed technical knowledge of the way the app is
5700 constructed, from creating an almost identical version of the
5701 app that could also access that data?

5702 *Mr. Chew. That is -- we are giving you third-party

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5703 monitors and transparency --

5704 *Mr. Obernolte. Yes, but they are monitoring the source
5705 code for your app. I mean, ByteDance, these engineers, have
5706 been working on this app for years. What would prevent them
5707 from making an app that could also access that data?

5708 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I think we are going into the
5709 area where, you know, what if there is a hacker, what if
5710 there is this.

5711 *Mr. Obernolte. Okay.

5712 *Mr. Chew. You know, this is a common industry problem,
5713 as you know.

5714 *Mr. Obernolte. Yes. But, well, I mean, it is just --
5715 I see my time is expired. It illustrates the point --

5716 *The Chair. Okay --

5717 *Mr. Obernolte. -- I am just skeptical that you are
5718 technically able to do --

5719 *The Chair. The gentleman's time has expired.

5720 *Mr. Obernolte. -- what you promised.

5721 *The Chair. The gentlelady's time has expired.

5722 Mr. Chew, I recognize that we have run over. I
5723 appreciate your time. We have just a few members left, and

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5724 would appreciate the chance for them to get to answer -- or
5725 ask their five minutes' worth of questions.

5726 The gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Griffith, is recognized
5727 for five minutes.

5728 *Mr. Griffith. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

5729 Mr. Chew, you share legal counsel lawyers with
5730 ByteDance, yes or no?

5731 *Mr. Chew. Yes, we do.

5732 *Mr. Griffith. And you testified that you prepared
5733 extensively with your legal team for this hearing, yes or no?

5734 *Mr. Chew. With my team in D.C., including the --

5735 *Mr. Griffith. Including some of your legal counsel.

5736 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

5737 *Mr. Griffith. Right. And did they tell you about the
5738 report to the Australian Senate of March 14th that I
5739 referenced earlier? Did they tell you that that report was
5740 out there? Yes or no.

5741 *Mr. Chew. I cannot recall how I found out about the
5742 report.

5743 *Mr. Griffith. But you know about the report. Okay.

5744 *Mr. Chew. I can check, and -- yes.

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5745 *Mr. Griffith. And did they tell you to favorably cite
5746 the Citizens Lab in your written testimony today, yes or no?

5747 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I need to get back to you on
5748 specifics --

5749 *Mr. Griffith. They helped you with the preparation of
5750 your written statement, though, didn't they?

5751 *Mr. Chew. A team prepares, yes.

5752 *Mr. Griffith. Yes. And did they tell you that the
5753 director of Citizen Labs says he has called out your company
5754 for misrepresenting their report repeatedly, and has -- and
5755 did so as late as yesterday? Did they tell you about that?
5756 Yes or no.

5757 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, the Citizen Lab is saying they
5758 cannot prove a negative, which is what I have been trying to
5759 do for the last four hours.

5760 *Mr. Griffith. All right. But you cited it favorably
5761 as saying that it did positive things for you.

5762 That being said, let me ask you this. You keep talking
5763 about transparency, but you haven't been transparent with us
5764 here today. You were asked earlier by Mr. Hudson if you own
5765 stock in ByteDance. You said you didn't want to reveal that.

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5766 Well, we are trying to figure out what the ties are between
5767 ByteDance and TikTok. I am not going to ask you how many
5768 shares you own, but do you own shares in ByteDance, sir?

5769 *Mr. Chew. Yes, I do.

5770 *Mr. Griffith. All right. There you go. How about in
5771 TikTok?

5772 *Mr. Chew. Right now all employees own shares in one --

5773 *Mr. Griffith. Yes, sure. I expected that. I just
5774 don't understand why you didn't tell Mr. Hudson that, and
5775 were transparent earlier. Instead, you made us drag it out
5776 of you.

5777 All right. Now let's talk about the kids. You told
5778 several of our folks that there was a 60-minute deadline.
5779 You also told us that, if you were under the age of 18, you
5780 couldn't access the live section, the live option. So I
5781 texted my 17-year-old and my 15-year-old, and I basically got
5782 scoffs back, scoffs, when I said, "Are you all limited to 60
5783 minutes?'"

5784 My older son said, "Well, there is a notice I get from
5785 time to time that says I shouldn't be on more than 60
5786 minutes, but it never has kicked me off.'"

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5787 And my younger son said, "Oh, I am on as long as I want
5788 to be.'`

5789 So I am just informing you whoever told you,
5790 particularly if it was your legal team, that that is not
5791 accurate, that they are on for more than 60 minutes, and they
5792 can access the live section. I believe it was Mr. Carter
5793 that you said they couldn't, under 18, access the live -- you
5794 know, being on the live section. He has done it. So
5795 whatever it is you think you are doing, it ain't getting
5796 done.

5797 Now, let's talk about the law for a minute. You share a
5798 legal team, but you keep talking about how you got a firewall
5799 between you and ByteDance. You can't have an effective
5800 firewall under the United States interpretation of such if
5801 you are sharing legal counsel, because anything that you say
5802 to your legal counsel, they can share internally. If you
5803 have got the same lawyers -- now, maybe you have two
5804 different teams of lawyers in the law firm, but that is not
5805 what you said to us today. You said you share lawyers.
5806 There is no firewall, legally. I am just telling you.

5807 So if you want to clean it up and be transparent, you

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5808 need to do something about that. Wouldn't you agree, yes or
5809 no --

5810 *Mr. Chew. Congressman --

5811 *Mr. Griffith. -- that you need to do something about
5812 that?

5813 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I --

5814 *Mr. Griffith. You will look into it.

5815 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

5816 *Mr. Griffith. You will look into it. You have been
5817 looking into it all the time.

5818 All right. You told Dr. Burgess, when asked if your
5819 employees -- if your employees who were members of the
5820 Chinese Communist Party had access to TikTok data from the
5821 U.S. You said you didn't know who was a member of the
5822 Communist Party. But then Congressman -- to Congressman
5823 Walberg you said that the CEO of TikTok was not a member of
5824 the communist -- the Chinese Communist Party. And to
5825 Congressman Kelly you said the founder of TikTok was not a
5826 member of the Communist Chinese Party.

5827 Sir, either you know who is and isn't a member of the
5828 Chinese Communist Party or you don't. Which one is it? I

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5829 submit that you know, and you just aren't giving us the
5830 straight story. Clearly, you know, but you denied that to
5831 Dr. Burgess.

5832 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, I can ask one or two people,
5833 but we have no policy to ask all the employees. I can ask
5834 one or two people, but I -- you know, who are in --

5835 *Mr. Griffith. But it is reasonable to assume that,
5836 with a significant number of members of the country of China
5837 being members of the Chinese Communist Party, logic would
5838 tell us -- you are a logical man, I assume -- logic would
5839 tell us that there are a fair number of your employees who
5840 are members of the Chinese Communist Party, at least a dozen
5841 or so, who have access to this data. Isn't that so?

5842 *Mr. Chew. Again, like I said, I can ask one or two
5843 people. We don't have a policy to ask everybody.

5844 *Mr. Griffith. I said earlier you are living in some
5845 kind of a cloud world, because either you know or you don't
5846 know.

5847 I yield back. Thank you, ma'am.

5848 *The Chair. The gentleman from South Carolina the chair
5849 recognizes for five minutes, Mr. Duncan.

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5850 *Mr. Duncan. Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it has
5851 been revealed today there is not a degree of separation
5852 between ByteDance and TikTok.

5853 I would like to enter in the record a Heritage
5854 Foundation document: "TikTok Generation: a CCP Official in
5855 Every Pocket.'`

5856 *The Chair. Without objection, so ordered.

5857 [The information follows:]

5858

5859 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

5860

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5861 *Mr. Duncan. And I would like to yield the balance of
5862 my time to Kelly Armstrong from North Dakota.

5863 *Mr. Armstrong. Thank you, Madam Chair.

5864 Mr. Chew, the TikTok Privacy Policy details extensive
5865 data collection on users. One line states that, "We may
5866 collect information about you from other publicly available
5867 sources.'" What publicly available data is TikTok collecting
5868 and adding to the profiles of users?

5869 *Mr. Chew. It will be publicly available, but I can get
5870 back to you on specifics.

5871 *Mr. Armstrong. Okay. What is the purpose of obtaining
5872 even more data on your users beyond the data collected from
5873 the platform?

5874 *Mr. Chew. We collect data -- we want to give our
5875 users, by the way, a lot of transparency on what data we
5876 collect. We give them choices on the controls of their own
5877 privacy settings, and it really is to serve them a better
5878 experience. This is the reason why so many people love the
5879 app. It is a great experience.

5880 *Mr. Armstrong. So how does the non-TikTok-related data
5881 service -- relate to the service provided?

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5882 *Mr. Chew. I need to check the specifics, and
5883 understand the question, and get back to you.

5884 *Mr. Armstrong. Okay. Do you think the average TikTok
5885 user knows that you are -- and understands that TikTok's data
5886 collection extends to information outside the use of the app?

5887 *Mr. Chew. We do give transparent information on this.
5888 And like I said, we -- I -- we don't -- I don't believe we
5889 collect more information than most other social media
5890 platforms out there.

5891 *Mr. Armstrong. Well, and the reason I ask this --
5892 because I am going to go back into the corporate structure.
5893 You described that TikTok is a subsidiary of ByteDance. Mr.
5894 Griffith just said that you guys share the same lawyers. You
5895 have stated that your direct report is the CEO of ByteDance.
5896 But you have also stated that, at certain levels, TikTok
5897 operates without direct daily control from ByteDance. You
5898 have used content moderation as an example for that.

5899 TikTok's privacy policy states that you may share user
5900 data within your corporate group. Does that corporate group
5901 include ByteDance?

5902 *Mr. Chew. If you are talking about that one entity

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5903 that has the share for the -- for Chinese media licensing
5904 purposes, I think it is called Beijing Douyin Services. If
5905 you are talking about that entity, of the government share,
5906 the answer is, you know, we have cut off, you know, all
5907 access of U.S. data sets to that.

5908 *Mr. Armstrong. So --

5909 *Mr. Chew. Employees of the entity.

5910 *Mr. Armstrong. But your user privacy -- so your
5911 corporate -- ByteDance is part of your corporate group.

5912 *Mr. Chew. ByteDance is the top company.

5913 *Mr. Armstrong. So --

5914 *Mr. Chew. So, yes, you are talking about the other
5915 entities within the group.

5916 *Mr. Armstrong. So you just testified that you
5917 firewalled this. Does that statement -- so you are saying
5918 the TikTok's executives you -- that operate independently of
5919 ByteDance, but does that statement not hold for sharing of
5920 access to data?

5921 *Mr. Chew. Well, I was talking about that one entity
5922 that has -- that many of you have raised some concerns, you
5923 know. That is the entity that I am talking about, the entity

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5924 with the Chinese Government's investment that has -- that is
5925 for the purpose of Chinese Internet licensing for the Chinese
5926 business --

5927 *Mr. Armstrong. Let me ask it a different way. What
5928 other entities have access to TikTok user data?

5929 *Mr. Chew. Well, after Project Texas, we are going to
5930 move it so that only TikTok user data security has controlled
5931 access of that data.

5932 *Mr. Armstrong. Okay. So -- and we could bring you
5933 back either -- and after Project Texas is done. But right
5934 now, what other entities have access to TikTok's user data
5935 today?

5936 *Mr. Chew. Only by requirement. It is really only by
5937 requirement. Certain employees may use -- may need --
5938 require some access of data to help build the product.

5939 But for U.S., you know, we have moved it from Project
5940 Texas, and by the end of this year it will be firewalled
5941 away.

5942 *Mr. Armstrong. But this is your privacy policy today.
5943 Like, I understand what you are telling us, what is
5944 potentially going to happen in the future. I have concerns

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5945 again about CFIUS, and government involvement, private
5946 organization, all of that. I am just saying this is your
5947 user agreement today.

5948 So your user agreement says that you share access with
5949 your corporate group.

5950 *Mr. Chew. You know --

5951 *Mr. Armstrong. You are telling me what is going to
5952 happen whenever Project Texas gets done. I am asking you
5953 today. Who has access to TikTok's user data?

5954 *Mr. Chew. In our user agreement, Congressman, in our
5955 privacy policy, we also added a link so that our users in the
5956 U.S. can be informed about Project Texas. The link is there.

5957 *Mr. Armstrong. So the link is there to private -- but
5958 -- I understand what you are trying to do moving forward. I
5959 have my own concerns about that. But we are sitting here
5960 today in a hearing, and your privacy policy is different than
5961 your testimony. Your privacy policy specifically says that
5962 you can share user data within your corporate group.

5963 So you are saying, even though you're your privacy
5964 policy says that, you are not doing it?

5965 *Mr. Chew. Like I said, no, I don't think there is any

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5966 contradiction here. Like I said, Project Texas, when it is
5967 done, we firewall off that data. We still have some legacy
5968 data in Virginia and Singapore that we started deleting, and
5969 we will be done by the end of this year.

5970 *Mr. Armstrong. So at the end of this year, then you
5971 won't share it. Does that mean you are sharing it today?

5972 *Mr. Chew. I don't believe so, but there is some --

5973 *Mr. Armstrong. Then why haven't you changed your
5974 privacy policy? Why haven't you updated it?

5975 *Mr. Chew. We did update it, and we gave our users more
5976 information on Project Texas. We did update it.

5977 [Pause.]

5978 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back. The gentleman
5979 from Texas the chair recognizes for five minutes, Mr.
5980 Crenshaw.

5981 *Mr. Crenshaw. Thank you, Madam Chair.

5982 Thank you, Mr. Chew, for bringing Republicans and
5983 Democrats together. I appreciate that.

5984 I want to get right to the critical point of concern.
5985 So TikTok is able to collect massive amounts of personal
5986 data. We all know that. That means it could, if it desired

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5987 to, use this data to influence narratives and trends, create
5988 misinformation campaigns, encourage self-destructive
5989 behavior, purposefully allow drug cartels to communicate
5990 freely and organize human and drug trafficking.

5991 Now, to be fair, all social media companies could do
5992 that. But here is the difference. It is only TikTok that is
5993 controlled by the Chinese Communist Party. All these other
5994 social media companies are not. Mr. Chew, do you agree that
5995 TikTok is controlled by the CCP?

5996 *Mr. Chew. No.

5997 *Mr. Crenshaw. Okay, I thought you would say that. I
5998 disagree, as you thought I might say.

5999 Here is why I disagree: Your parent company is
6000 ByteDance, right?

6001 *Mr. Chew. That is correct.

6002 *Mr. Crenshaw. It is correct. So many of the workers
6003 who work at ByteDance are Communist Party members, right?

6004 *Mr. Chew. I wouldn't know.

6005 *Mr. Crenshaw. Well, I think, for example, the chief
6006 editor at ByteDance, Zhang Fuping, is the Communist Party's
6007 secretary. Correct?

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6008 *Mr. Chew. He works on the Chinese business, not on
6009 TikTok.

6010 *Mr. Crenshaw. Right. He works for ByteDance, the
6011 parent company.

6012 *Mr. Chew. He works on the Chinese business.

6013 *Mr. Crenshaw. Right, the parent company of TikTok.

6014 *Mr. Chew. The Chinese business is called Douyin.

6015 *Mr. Crenshaw. Yes, but it is all associated with
6016 ByteDance, right?

6017 *Mr. Chew. So ByteDance owns a number of businesses.

6018 *Mr. Crenshaw. Right. You all report to ByteDance.
6019 Everybody is part of ByteDance. Okay? And do you know of
6020 any other employees that work for ByteDance that are part of
6021 the Chinese Communist Party?

6022 *Mr. Chew. Like I said, you know, there are --
6023 ByteDance has -- owns Chinese businesses, and they operate in
6024 China.

6025 *Mr. Crenshaw. You don't know how many, but you
6026 acknowledge many must be card-carrying members of the CCP,
6027 right?

6028 *Mr. Chew. In the Chinese business, yes.

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6029 *Mr. Crenshaw. Yes. I mean, the CCP holds a -- what is
6030 called a golden share in ByteDance that allows the CCP to
6031 control one board seat in ByteDance. That is public --

6032 *Mr. Chew. That is not correct.

6033 *Mr. Crenshaw. It is not correct?

6034 *Mr. Chew. No, it is --

6035 *Mr. Crenshaw. It is publicly reported. They admitted
6036 to it.

6037 *Mr. Chew. It is -- on our website we have updated it,
6038 so we have -- can give people more transparent information on
6039 this.

6040 They have a share in a subsidiary that is only for the
6041 Chinese business. It has nothing to do with TikTok, and it
6042 is for the purposes of content licensing in China.

6043 *Mr. Crenshaw. So there is not an internal CCP
6044 committee, which is a regular thing that happens in China,
6045 they have a CCP committee internally inside the company.

6046 *Mr. Chew. I run TikTok. I cannot represent the
6047 Chinese business.

6048 *Mr. Crenshaw. ByteDance, I am talking about ByteDance.
6049 No arrangement in ByteDance?

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6050 *Mr. Chew. Again --

6051 *Mr. Crenshaw. Here is the main point of concern.

6052 China's 2017 national intelligence law states very clearly
6053 that "any organization or citizen shall support, assist, and
6054 cooperate with state intelligence work in accordance with the
6055 law, and maintain the secrecy of all knowledge of state
6056 intelligence work.'`

6057 In other words, ByteDance, and also your TikTok
6058 employees that live in China, they must cooperate with
6059 Chinese intelligence whenever they are called upon. And if
6060 they are called upon, they are bound to secrecy. That would
6061 include you. So, Mr. Chew, if the CCP tells ByteDance to
6062 turn over all data that TikTok has collected inside the U.S.,
6063 even within Project Texas, do they have to do so, according
6064 to Chinese law?

6065 *Mr. Chew. Congressman, first, I am Singaporean.

6066 *Mr. Crenshaw. That is fine. But there are employees
6067 of yours, and ByteDance is in China.

6068 *Mr. Chew. We understand this concern. In my opening
6069 statement we said we hear these concerns. We didn't try to
6070 avoid them or, you know, trivialize them. We built something

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6071 where we take that data and put it out of reach. This is
6072 what we did. We put it out of reach.

6073 *Mr. Crenshaw. Out of reach. But they own you.

6074 *Mr. Chew. No, we put it out of reach by storing
6075 them --

6076 *Mr. Crenshaw. ByteDance owns TikTok. If ByteDance is
6077 -- and the CCP owns ByteDance, because the CCP owns everybody
6078 in China.

6079 *Mr. Chew. Well --

6080 *Mr. Crenshaw. And so, by law, they can make them do
6081 whatever they want, and they say that, by law, you can't tell
6082 anyone about it. So they can make you hand over that data.
6083 Is that correct?

6084 *Mr. Chew. That data is stored here, in American soil,
6085 by an American company --

6086 *Mr. Crenshaw. Well, you say that. We --

6087 *Mr. Chew. -- overseen by American --

6088 *Mr. Crenshaw. We thought that, but leaked audio from
6089 80 internal TikTok meetings shows that U.S. user data has
6090 been repeatedly accessed from China when you said it hasn't
6091 been.

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6092 And here is the other thing. Following back on my
6093 colleague's line of questioning, in your own privacy policy
6094 it says that you may share information within your so-called
6095 corporate group. Is ByteDance part of that corporate group?

6096 *Mr. Chew. If you are talking about the share of the
6097 entity with the share, like I shared with the previous --

6098 *Mr. Crenshaw. Is ByteDance part of the corporate
6099 group?

6100 *Mr. Chew. ByteDance is a holding company. It is part
6101 of the corporate group, yes.

6102 *Mr. Crenshaw. It is part of the corporate group.

6103 *Mr. Chew. Yes.

6104 *Mr. Crenshaw. Okay. So your own privacy policy says
6105 you have to share data with ByteDance. And if the CCP says,
6106 hey, ByteDance, you are going to do what we say, and you
6107 can't tell anyone about it, because by law, according to that
6108 2017 national intelligence law, they have to do it, that is
6109 our concern.

6110 *Mr. Chew. This --

6111 *Mr. Crenshaw. Maybe you haven't done it yet, but my
6112 point is that you might have to. And that is where our

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6113 concerns come from.

6114 I mean, over 300 TikTok employees have worked for
6115 China's state-run propaganda media. That is just from
6116 looking at their LinkedIn profiles. Okay?

6117 So here -- and my last point is this. I want to say
6118 this to all the teenagers out there, and TikTok influencers
6119 who think we are just old and out of touch and don't know
6120 what we are talking about, trying to take away your favorite
6121 app. You may not care that your data is being accessed now,
6122 but it will be one day when you do care about it.

6123 And here is the real problem: with data comes power.
6124 They can choose what you see and how you see it. They can
6125 make you believe things that are not true. They can
6126 encourage you to engage in behavior that will destroy your
6127 life. Even if it is not happening yet, it could in the
6128 future.

6129 The long-term goal of the Chinese Communist Party is the
6130 demise of the American power, and that starts with our youth.
6131 At any moment they could demand that all of TikTok's data be
6132 used to design an AI algorithm with the sole purpose of
6133 promoting Chinese interests and destroying our society from

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6134 within. You want to know why that is Democrat -- why that is
6135 -- why Democrats and Republicans have come together on this?
6136 That is why we are so concerned.

6137 Thank you, and I yield back.

6138 *The Chair. The gentleman yields back.

6139 I remind the members they have 10 business days to
6140 submit questions for the record, and I ask our witness to
6141 respond to the questions promptly.

6142 Pursuant to committee rules, I ask unanimous consent to
6143 enter the documents from the staff list into the record.

6144 Without objection, so ordered.

6145 [The information follows:]

6146

6147 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

6148

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6149 *The Chair. Members should submit their questions by
6150 the close of business on April 6th.

6151 Without objection, the committee is adjourned.

6152 [Whereupon, at 3:24 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]