

**Opening Statement of Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee Markup of
Two Subcommittee Bills**

November 14, 2019

Today, we are here to consider two bills that reauthorize important programs that protect and support American consumers and businesses.

The first bill reauthorizes Brand USA—a unique public-private partnership established by the Travel Promotion Act of 2009 to promote foreign travel to the United States. Tourism is critical to our economy and our communities. As we heard from the witnesses at our legislative hearing last month, foreign travelers to the United States spend more than their domestic counterparts—an average of \$4,200 per trip on transportation, hotels, restaurants, shops, and more.

Brand USA is a proven success. It delivers a high return on investment—\$28 back to the economy for every marketing dollar spent. We must build on this success, and ensure that the United States remains a premiere destination for international visitors. At our hearing, witnesses warned that travel to the United States has been in decline recently due to various factors, including a strong U.S. dollar and increasing competition from other countries in the global tourism marketplace. The industry has dubbed this the “Trump Slump” in part because of the international tensions fueled by President Trump. It is critical that Brand USA be reauthorized as soon as possible to prevent further erosion of the U.S. tourism industry.

I applaud Representatives Welch and Bilirakis for introducing legislation to ensure Brand USA is funded through 2027.

The second bill would reauthorize the U.S. SAFE WEB Act of 2006 for another seven years. The SAFE WEB Act affirms the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) authority to go after foreign actors engaged in wrongdoing affecting U.S. consumers and businesses. The law also bolsters the FTC's ability to exchange information and to provide investigative assistance to foreign law enforcement agencies. This kind of cross-border cooperation is crucial to the FTC's continued ability to bring strong enforcement actions.

During last month's legislative hearing, we heard from Aaron Burstein, a former FTC attorney, on how the SAFE WEB Act has helped the FTC take down not just international fraudsters and scam artists, but also companies that violate children's privacy—helping keep our families safe. We also heard about how our leadership in

international cooperation has encouraged other countries, like Canada, to follow our lead and pass legislation modeled after the SAFE WEB Act.

In a letter to the Subcommittee Chair and Ranking Member for the hearing record, all five Commissioners of the FTC—both Democratic and Republican—urged Congress to reauthorize the SAFE WEB Act. The Commissioners wrote that the authorities provided by SAFE WEB have become more important since the law was first enacted in 2006, as the digital economy has become more global and complex. They also noted that the FTC’s complaints database continues to receive a high volume of complaints against foreign businesses all over the world.

If Congress does not renew the SAFE WEB Act, it will expire next September. This would jeopardize the FTC's ability to protect U.S. consumers and businesses from foreign wrongdoers.

We should extend both of these critical programs and I urge Members support.

Thank you, and I yield back my time.