

Opening Statement for Republican Leader Bilirakis
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce
Legislative hearing on “Holding Big Tech Accountable: Legislation to Build a Safer Internet”

December 9th, 2021

As Prepared for Delivery

Good morning everyone.

I want to thank my colleagues for their interest to improve transparency and increase protections online. There are a lot of initiatives under consideration today, and all of them raise issues that deserve our attention.

Legislation brought forth by my friends in the Majority would require the FTC to issue new rules and regulations and would grant the FTC with additional enforcement tools to reduce dark patterns, discriminatory algorithms, harmful content directed at children, and would also grant new rights for consumers to take control of their data.

I hope that means this is a precursor and not a substitute for passing a national privacy and data security law. That is the best and most comprehensive way Congress can protect our constituents through these means. I think many of the issues we will be discussing today can and should be a part of that larger privacy and data security discussion, and I sincerely hope my colleagues will join me in that effort. I'll say to my fellow colleagues that my door is always open.

Earlier last month Republican Leader Rodgers released draft legislative language for the Control Our Data Act, or CODA, which would create one national standard for privacy and data security, establish clear rules of the road for businesses to be able to comply, and give every American equal data protections regardless of the location of their home. I for one certainly want to see rules that are clear and easy to understand for my constituents. I also want to assure that the FTC Bureau of Privacy that was included in our proposal has the appropriate staff and resources to enforce the national law.

I hope the panel agrees today that there are elements of all these bills that can be incorporated in some fashion in this framework to ensure we leave behind a legacy that will benefit every American.

We must also take seriously the threat from China, and moving forward on those two bills today is an important step towards holding them accountable. The legislation before us will provide Americans with greater transparency into the applications and websites they use online. H.R. 3991, the TELL Act led by Representative Duncan, would inform users if their information

is stored in China and whether the information is accessible by the CCP or a Chinese state-owned entity. H.R. 4000, the Internet Application I.D. Act, led by Representative Kinzinger, would require websites and online sellers or distributors of mobile applications that are located in China, or owned by the CCP, to disclose that location or ownership to users.

For those asking why we didn't invite a witness to today's hearing that has ties to China to share their views, you should know we did. We used one of our witness slots to invite TikTok to testify, but unfortunately they declined our invitation. Madam Chair, I hope we can work together to invite them before the subcommittee in the near future, just as Senators Blumenthal and Blackburn did in the Senate. There were many questions left unanswered from that hearing in the Senate last month on the stewardship of their platform and I am confident that the panel today can shed light on our shared concerns.

These are all very important matters our Subcommittee is examining today, so I thank the Chair for holding this hearing, and to the witnesses for being here. I look forward to your testimony on these bills and other proposals we have publicly circulated for this committee's review.

I yield back.
