

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3849

To promote competition, lower entry barriers, and reduce switching costs
for consumers and businesses online.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 11, 2021

Ms. SCANLON (for herself, Mr. OWENS, Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. BUCK, and Mr. NADLER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To promote competition, lower entry barriers, and reduce
switching costs for consumers and businesses online.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Augmenting Compat-
5 ibility and Competition by Enabling Service Switching Act
6 of 2021” or the “ACCESS Act of 2021”.

7 **SEC. 2. UNFAIR METHOD OF COMPETITION.**

8 A violation of this Act, or standards issued pursuant
9 to this Act, by a person, partnership, or corporation oper-
10 ating a covered platform, in or affecting commerce, shall

1 be an unfair method of competition in violation of section
2 5(a)(1) of the Federal Trade Commission Act (15 U.S.C.
3 45).

4 **SEC. 3. PORTABILITY.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—A covered platform shall maintain
6 a set of transparent, third-party-accessible interfaces (in-
7 cluding application programming interfaces) to enable the
8 secure transfer of data to a user, or with the affirmative
9 consent of a user, to a business user at the direction of
10 a user, in a structured, commonly used, and machine-read-
11 able format that complies with the standards issued pursu-
12 ant to section 6(c).

13 (b) DATA SECURITY.—

14 (1) IN GENERAL.—A competing business or a
15 potential competing business that receives ported
16 user data from a covered platform shall reasonably
17 secure any user data it acquires, and shall take rea-
18 sonable steps to avoid introducing security risks to
19 data or the covered platform's information systems.

20 (2) VIOLATION.—A failure to comply with this
21 section is a violation of this Act and subject to the
22 enforcement under sections 9 and 10 of this Act.

23 (3) TERMINATION OF ACCESS.—The Commis-
24 sion may require the covered platform to cease the
25 transfer of data to a competing or potentially com-

1 peting business that the Commission finds has vio-
2 lated this section or standards adopted by the Com-
3 mission under section 6(c) of this Act.

4 (c) PORTABILITY OBLIGATIONS.—In order to achieve
5 portability under subsection (a), a covered platform shall
6 comply with the standards issued under section 6(c) by
7 the Commission.

8 **SEC. 4. INTEROPERABILITY.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—A covered platform shall maintain
10 a set of transparent, third-party-accessible interfaces (in-
11 cluding application programming interfaces) to facilitate
12 and maintain interoperability with a competing business
13 or a potential competing business that complies with the
14 standards issued pursuant to section 6(c).

15 (b) DATA SECURITY.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—A competing business or a
17 potential competing business that accesses an inter-
18 operability interface of a covered platform shall rea-
19 sonably secure any user data it acquires, processes,
20 or transmits, and shall take reasonable steps to
21 avoid introducing security risks to user data or the
22 covered platform's information systems.

23 (2) VIOLATION.—A failure to comply with this
24 section is a violation of this Act and subject to the
25 enforcement under sections 9 and 10 of this Act.

7 (c) INTEROPERABILITY OBLIGATIONS.—In order to
8 achieve interoperability under subsection (a), a covered
9 platform shall comply with the standards issued under sec-
10 tion 6(c) by the Commission.

(d) SECURITY AND PRIVACY STANDARDS.—Consistent with standards issued by the Commission under section 6(c) of this Act, a covered platform shall set privacy and security standards for access by competing businesses or potential competing businesses to the extent reasonably necessary to address a threat to the covered platform or user data, and shall report any suspected violations of those standards to the Commission.

19 (e) PROHIBITED CHANGES TO INTERFACES.—

1 that the change is not being made with the purpose
2 or effect of unreasonably denying access or under-
3 mining interoperability for competing businesses or
4 potential competing businesses.

5 (2) EXCEPTION.—A covered platform may
6 make a change affecting its interoperability inter-
7 faces without receiving approval from the Commis-
8 sion if that change is necessary to address a security
9 vulnerability or other exigent circumstance that cre-
10 ates an imminent risk to user privacy or security if
11 the change is narrowly tailored to the vulnerability
12 and does not have the purpose or effect of unreason-
13 ably denying access or undermining interoperability
14 for competing businesses or potential competing
15 businesses.

16 (3) INTERFACE INFORMATION.—

17 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120
18 days after the adoption of a rule by the Com-
19 mission under section 6(c) of this Act, a cov-
20 ered platform shall provide to competing busi-
21 nesses or potential competing businesses com-
22 plete and accurate documentation describing ac-
23 cess to the interoperability interface required
24 under this section.

6 (4) NOTICE OF CHANGES.—A covered platform
7 shall provide reasonable advance notice to a com-
8 peting business or a potential competing business,
9 which may be provided through public notice, of any
10 change to an interoperability interface maintained by
11 the covered platform that will affect the interoper-
12 ability of a competing business or a potential com-
13 peting business.

14 (f) DATA MINIMIZATION.—

1 and security of such data or maintaining interoperability of services.

3 **SEC. 5. DEFINITIONS.**

4 In this Act:

5 (1) PERSON.—The term “person” has the meaning given the term in subsection (a) of section 7 1 of the Clayton Act (15 U.S.C. 12).

8 (2) AFFIRMATIVE EXPRESS CONSENT.—The 9 term “affirmative express consent” means an affirmative 10 action of the consumer to make a choice following 11 a clear and conspicuous disclosure to the consumer, 12 separate and apart from any “privacy policy”, 13 “terms of service”, “terms of service”, “consent for research”, or other similar document, of—

15 (A) the types of Personal Information that 16 Respondent will disclose to third parties;

17 (B) the reason for such disclosures;

18 (C) the identity of all such third parties;

19 (D) any opportunities consumers have to 20 decline or rescind consent for such disclosures;

21 and

22 (E) how consumers may exercise any such 23 opportunities.

24 An affirmative action does not include obtaining a 25 consumer’s approval for a preselected default option.

(3) CLEAR AND CONSPICUOUS DISCLOSURE.—

2 The term “clear and conspicuous disclosure” means
3 that a required disclosure is difficult to miss such
4 that it is easily noticeable and easily understandable
5 by ordinary consumers, including in all of the fol-
6 lowing ways:

24 (C) An audible disclosure, including by
25 telephone or streaming video, must be delivered

1 in a volume, speed, and cadence sufficient for
2 ordinary consumers to easily hear and under-
3 stand it.

4 (D) In any communication using an inter-
5 active electronic medium, such as the Internet
6 or software, the disclosure must be unavoidable.

7 (E) The disclosure must use diction and
8 syntax understandable to ordinary consumers
9 and must appear in each language in which the
10 triggering representation appears.

11 (F) The disclosure must comply with these
12 requirements in each medium through which it
13 is received, including all electronic devices and
14 face-to-face communications.

15 (G) The disclosure must not be contra-
16 dicted or mitigated by, or inconsistent with,
17 anything else in the communication.

18 (H) When the representation or sales prac-
19 tice targets a specific audience, such as chil-
20 dren, the elderly, or the terminally ill, “ordinary
21 consumers” includes reasonable members of
22 that group.

23 (4) COMMISSION.—The term “Commission”
24 means the Federal Trade Commission.

1 (5) CONTROL.—The term “control” with re-
2 spect to a person means—

3 (A) holding 25 percent or more of the
4 stock of the person;

5 (B) having the right to 25 percent or more
6 of the profits of the person;

7 (C) having the right to 25 percent or more
8 of the assets of the person, in the event of the
9 person’s dissolution;

10 (D) if the person is a corporation, having
11 the power to designate 25 percent or more of
12 the directors of the person;

13 (E) if the person is a trust, having the
14 power to designate 25 percent or more of the
15 trustees; or

16 (F) otherwise exercises substantial control
17 over the person.

18 (6) COVERED PLATFORM.—The term “covered
19 platform” means an online platform—

20 (A) that has been designated as a “covered
21 platform” under section 6(a); or

22 (B) that—

23 (i) at the time of the Commission’s or
24 the Department of Justice’s designation
25 under section 2(d), or any of the twelve

1 months preceding that time, or in any of
2 the 12 months preceding the filing of a
3 complaint for an alleged violation of this
4 Act—

5 (I) has at least 50,000,000
6 United States-based monthly active
7 users on the online platform; or

(II) has at least 100,000 United States-based monthly active business users on the platform;

22 (iii) is a critical trading partner for
23 the sale or provision of any product or
24 service offered on or directly related to the
25 online platform.

1 (7) COVERED PLATFORM OPERATOR.—The
2 term “covered platform operator” means a person
3 that, directly or indirectly, owns or controls a cov-
4 ered platform.

5 (8) CRITICAL TRADING PARTNER.—The term
6 “critical trading partner” means a trading partner
7 that has the ability to restrict or impede—

8 (A) the access of a business user to its
9 users or customers; or

10 (B) the access of a business user to a tool
11 or service that it needs to effectively serve its
12 users or customers.

13 (9) DATA.—

14 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6
15 months after the date of enactment of this Act,
16 the Commission shall adopt rules in accordance
17 with section 553 of title 5, United States Code,
18 to define the term “data” for the purpose of
19 implementing and enforcing this Act.

20 (B) DATA.—The term “data” shall include
21 information that is collected by or provided to
22 a covered platform or competing business or a
23 potential competing business that is linked, or
24 reasonably linkable, to a specific user, user de-
25 vice, or customer of the covered platform or a

1 competing business or a potential competing
2 business.

3 (C) EXCLUSION.—The term “data” shall
4 not include proprietary data that does not per-
5 tain to the user or a user device of the covered
6 platform. The Commission shall narrowly con-
7 strue the term “proprietary data” for the pur-
8 poses of this Act.

9 (10) BUSINESS USER.—The term “business
10 user” means a person that utilizes or plans to utilize
11 the covered platform for the sale or provision of
12 products or services.

13 (11) INTEROPERABILITY INTERFACE.—The
14 term “interoperability interface” means an electronic
15 interface maintained by a covered platform for pur-
16 poses of achieving interoperability.

17 (12) ONLINE PLATFORM.—The term “online
18 platform” means a website, online or mobile applica-
19 tion, operating system, digital assistant, or online
20 service that—

21 (A) enables a user to generate content that
22 can be viewed by other users on the platform or
23 to interact with other content on the platform;

24 (B) facilitates the offering, sale, purchase,
25 payment, or shipping of goods or services, in-

1 cluding software applications, between and
2 among consumers or businesses not controlled
3 by the platform; or

4 (C) enables user searches or queries that
5 access or display a large volume of information.

6 **SEC. 6. IMPLEMENTATION.**

7 (a) COVERED PLATFORM DESIGNATION.—The Fed-
8 eral Trade Commission or Department of Justice may des-
9 ignate a covered platform for the purpose of implementing
10 and enforcing this Act. Such designation shall—

11 (1) be based on a finding that the criteria set
12 forth in paragraph (6) of section 5 are met;

13 (2) be issued in writing and published in the
14 Federal Register; and

15 (3) will apply for 10 years from its issuance re-
16 gardless of whether there is a change in control or
17 ownership over the covered platform unless the Fed-
18 eral Trade Commission or the Department of Jus-
19 tice removes the designation pursuant to subsection
20 (b).

21 (b) REMOVAL OF COVERED PLATFORM DESIGNA-
22 TION.—The Commission or the Department of Justice
23 shall—

24 (1) consider whether its designation of a cov-
25 ered platform pursuant to subsection (a) should be

1 removed prior to the expiration of the 10-year period
2 if the covered platform operator files a request with
3 the Commission or the Department of Justice, which
4 shows that the online platform is no longer a critical
5 trading partner; and

6 (2) determine whether to grant a request sub-
7 mitted under paragraph (1) not later than 120 days
8 after the date of the filing of such request.

9 (c) RULEMAKING AND TECHNICAL STANDARDS.—

10 (1) After designating an online platform as a
11 covered platform, the Commission shall issue stand-
12 ards of interoperability specific to the covered plat-
13 form. These standards shall implement the require-
14 ments of sections 3 and 4 of this Act. In adopting
15 the standards implementing the requirements of sec-
16 tions 3 and 4, the Commission shall seek to encour-
17 age entry by reducing or eliminating the network ef-
18 ffects that limit competition with the covered plat-
19 form, ensure that competing businesses or a poten-
20 tial competing business interconnects with the cov-
21 ered platform on fair and nondiscriminatory terms,
22 and protect data security and privacy.

23 (2) The Commission shall—

24 (A) establish a technical committee, as de-
25 scribed in section 7 of this Act, to develop pro-

1 posed standards implementing the requirements
2 of section 3 as they apply to a specific covered
3 platform;

4 (B) issue such standards in accordance
5 with section 553 of title 5, United States Code;
6 and

7 (C) reject standards that have the purpose
8 or effect of unreasonably denying access, under-
9 mine interoperability, or are unduly disruptive
10 to interoperability.

11 (d) COMPLIANCE ASSESSMENT.—The Commission
12 shall regularly assess compliance by covered platforms
13 with the provisions of this Act and may—

14 (1) undertake such investigation as appropriate
15 to render this assessment;

16 (2) issue subpoenas and civil investigative de-
17 mands for relevant information, including any infor-
18 mation that is necessary to effectuate the goals of
19 sections 3 and 4 this Act, and consult with other
20 agencies as appropriate; and

21 (3) prescribe such other rules in accordance
22 with section 553 of title 5, United States Code as
23 may be necessary and appropriate to carry out sec-
24 tions 3 and 4 of this Act.

1 (e) AGENCY COMPLAINTS.—The Commission shall
2 establish procedures under which a user, covered platform,
3 or a business user may file a complaint alleging a violation
4 of this Act.

5 (f) RECIPROCITY.—A business user shall not be
6 under any obligation to adopt or comply with the require-
7 ments of this Act or the rules adopted by the Commission
8 under this Act unless it chooses to—

9 (1) initiate the secure transfer of data from a
10 covered platform under section 3 of this Act; or
11 (2) access an interoperability interface of a cov-
12 ered platform under section 4 of this Act.

13 **SEC. 7. TECHNICAL COMMITTEE.**

14 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

15 (1) Not later than 180 days following the enact-
16 ment of this Act, the Commission shall establish a
17 technical committee to assist the Commission with
18 considerations relating to implementation and tech-
19 nical aspects of the requirements under sections 3
20 and 4 of this Act.

21 (2) The size of the committee and its member-
22 ship is within the sole discretion of the Commission
23 except as specified in subsection 7(b).

24 (b) COMPOSITION.—Each technical committee shall
25 include—

1 (1) representatives of businesses that, in the
2 judgement of the Commission, utilize or compete
3 with the platform;

4 (2) representatives of competition or privacy ad-
5 vocacy organizations, and independent academics
6 that possess technical, legal, economic, financial, or
7 other knowledge that the Commission may deem
8 useful;

9 (3) a representative from the National Institute
10 of Standards and Technology; and

11 (4) representatives of a covered platform,
12 which, if required by Commission, shall provide a
13 nonvoting advisory member to provide consultation
14 and other aid to the technical committee. A failure
15 by the covered platform to participate in good faith
16 in the development of standards by the Technical
17 Committee shall be a violation of this statute.

18 (c) GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES.—Each technical
19 committee established under this section shall meet regu-
20 larly to provide information, analysis, and recommenda-
21 tions to the Commission on the standards of portability
22 and interoperability and any changes to those standards.

23 These standards should—

24 (1) seek to reduce or eliminate network effects
25 that limit competition with the covered platform;

1 (2) establish data security and privacy protec-
2 tions for data portability and interoperability;

3 (3) prevent fraudulent, malicious, or abusive ac-
4 tivity by a competing business or a potential com-
5 peting business; and

6 (4) establish reasonable thresholds related to
7 the frequency, nature, and volume of requests by a
8 competing business or a potential competing busi-
9 ness to access resources maintained by the covered
10 platform, beyond which the covered platform may
11 assess a reasonable fee for such access that shall be
12 reasonably proportional to the cost, complexity, and
13 risk to the covered platform of providing such ac-
14 cess, and do not limit the ability or deter the incen-
15 tive of a competing business or a potentially com-
16 peting business to interoperate with the covered
17 platform.

18 (d) ROLE.—The role of technical committees is advi-
19 sory in nature, and such committees shall have no imple-
20 mentation or enforcement authority. However, the Com-
21 mission shall give strong consideration to the rec-
22 ommendations of such committees in implementing this
23 Act.

24 (e) NONAPPLICABILITY OF THE FEDERAL ADVISORY
25 COMMITTEE ACT.—The Federal Advisory Committee Act

1 (5 U.S.C. App.) shall not apply with respect to the tech-
2 nical committees.

3 **SEC. 8. JUDICIAL REVIEW.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Any party that is subject to a cov-
5 ered platform designation pursuant to section 6(a) of this
6 Act, a final order issued in any district court, or a final
7 order of the Commission issued in an administrative adju-
8 dicative proceeding may within 30 days of the issuance
9 of such order, petition for review of such order in the
10 United States Court of Appeals for the District of Colum-
11 bia Circuit.

12 (b) TREATMENT OF FINDINGS.—In a proceeding for
13 judicial review of a covered platform designation pursuant
14 to section 6(a) of this Act or a final order of the Commis-
15 sion, the findings of the Commission as to the facts, if
16 supported by evidence, shall be conclusive.

17 **SEC. 9. ENFORCEMENT.**

18 (a) COMMISSION LITIGATION AUTHORITY.—If the
19 Commission has reason to believe that a covered platform
20 violated this Act, the Commission may commence a civil
21 action, in its own name by any of its attorneys designated
22 by it for such purpose, to recover a civil penalty under
23 this Act and seek other appropriate relief in a district
24 court of the United States against the covered platform
25 operator.

1 (b) EMERGENCY RELIEF.—

2 (1) The Commission may seek a temporary in-
3 junction requiring the covered platform operator to
4 take or stop taking any action for not more than
5 120 days and the court shall grant such relief if the
6 Commission proves—

7 (A) there is a plausible claim that a cov-
8 ered platform operator took an action that
9 could violate this Act; and

10 (B) that action impairs the ability of at
11 least one company to compete with the covered
12 platform.

13 (2) The emergency relief shall not last more
14 than 120 days from the filing of the complaint.

15 (3) The court shall terminate the emergency re-
16 lief at any time that the covered platform operator
17 proves that the Commission has not taken reason-
18 able steps to investigate whether a violation has oc-
19 curred.

20 (4) Nothing in this subsection prevents or limits
21 the Commission from seeking other equitable relief
22 as provided in section 10 of this Act.

23 (c) STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.—A proceeding for a
24 violation of this Act may be commenced not later than
25 6 years after such violation occurs.

1 SEC. 10. REMEDIES.

2 (a) CIVIL PENALTY.—The Commission may recover
3 a civil penalty for a violation of this Act, which shall ac-
4 crue to the United States, in an amount not more than
5 the greater of—

6 (1) 15 percent of the total United States rev-
7 enue of the person, partnership, or corporation for
8 the previous calendar year; or

9 (2) 30 percent of the United States revenue of
10 the person, partnership, or corporation in any line of
11 business affected or targeted by the unlawful con-
12 duct during the period of the unlawful conduct.

13 (b) REMEDIES IN ADDITION.—Remedies provided in
14 this subsection are in addition to, and not in lieu of, any
15 other remedy available to the Commission under Federal
16 law.

17 (1) RESTITUTION; CONTRACT RESCISSION AND
18 REFORMATION; REFUNDS; RETURN OF PROPERTY.—
19 The Commission may seek, and a court may order,
20 with respect to the violation that gives rise to the
21 suit, restitution for losses, rescission or reformation
22 of contracts, refund of money, or return of property.

23 (2) DISGORGEMENT.—The Commission may
24 seek, and a court may order, disgorgement of any
25 unjust enrichment that a covered platform obtained
26 as a result of the violation that gives rise to the suit.

1 (3) INJUNCTION.—The Commission may seek,
2 and the court may order, relief in equity as nec-
3 essary to prevent, restrain, or prohibit violations of
4 this Act.

5 (c) REPEAT OFFENDERS.—If the fact finder deter-
6 mines that a covered platform has shown a pattern or
7 practice of violating this Act, the court shall consider re-
8 quiring that the Chief Executive Officer forfeit to the
9 United States Treasury any compensation received by that
10 person during the 12 months preceding or following the
11 filing of a complaint alleging a violation of this Act.

12 **SEC. 11. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**

13 Nothing in this Act shall be construed to limit any
14 authority of the Attorney General or the Federal Trade
15 Commission under the antitrust laws, section 5 of the
16 Federal Trade Commission Act (15 U.S.C. 45), or any
17 other provision of law or to limit the application of any
18 law.

19 **SEC. 12. SEVERABILITY.**

20 If any provision of this Act, an amendment made by
21 this Act, or the application of such provision or amend-
22 ment to any person or circumstance is held to be unconsti-
23 tutional, the remainder of this Act and of the amendments
24 made by this Act, and the application of the remaining

- 1 provisions of this Act and amendments to any person or
- 2 circumstance shall not be affected.

○