

May 17, 2024

Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Chair  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
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Washington, DC 20515-4705

Honorable Frank Pallone  
Ranking Member  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
2322A Rayburn House Office Building  
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Honorable Gus Bilirakis  
Chairman Innovation, Data, and Commerce  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
2306 Rayburn HOB  
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Honorable Jan Schakowsky  
Ranking Member Innovation, Data, and Commerce  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
2408 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

The undersigned organizations and experts are writing to express our strong support for provisions that would ensure oversight and accountability of the tech sector, including platform transparency and researcher access. As you look to protect minors and safeguard Americans' data privacy online, we urge you to include the strongest possible transparency provisions, which are crucial to ensuring compliance with federal statutes and creating safer, healthier online spaces.

With key bills gaining momentum right now, Congress has a chance to do what many thought would never be possible and what tech companies have fought against for nearly two decades — dramatically tilt the balance of power on the internet towards consumers by requiring the largest online providers to prioritize the privacy and safety of their users. The attention of both parties and both chambers to these important proposals deserves to be celebrated.

However, meaningful transparency is a key pillar of tech accountability. Without any legislative or regulatory mandate to do so, the largest tech companies have chosen to reveal little about how their platforms work. Through the persistent work of researchers and Congressional offices, as well the bravery of whistleblowers, we have learned key information about how tech companies scrape and monetize our data, hook the attention of our children, and divide our

communities with the most inflammatory content. But too often, efforts to uncover the truth are blocked by the companies or silenced by the threat of lawsuits.

This year, both [TikTok](#) and [Meta](#) restricted tools used by independent researchers and academics. The U.S. needs a consistent, meaningful transparency framework to truly unlock the black box, empower policymakers, and enforce other reform efforts like kids' safety and comprehensive privacy. Right now, we're heading in the opposite direction.

Bipartisan, effective provisions to ensure accountability, oversight, and compliance include:

- Advancing our understanding of the societal and mental health impacts of social media by requiring large platforms to provide qualified, independent, and approved researchers with access to certain platform data;
- Requiring online platforms to conduct and publish risk assessments focused on the online safety of minors and data privacy, including detailing their risk mitigation efforts. Using third-party, independent auditors to confirm these risk mitigation practices annually (similar to construction-industry safety audits).
- Assuring user privacy and protecting proprietary corporate information through strict privacy and cybersecurity requirements; and
- Preventing retaliation against researchers and companies by shielding individuals, organizations, and platforms that adhere to privacy and cybersecurity safeguards from legal liability.
- Requiring online platforms to develop comprehensive "ad libraries." These libraries should include the content of all advertisements on the platform, who paid for each advertisement, the period during which an advertisement was presented, the total number of recipients reached, and information about the extent to which an advertisement was recommended, amplified, or restricted. Meta has long maintained an ad library, but has [restricted researcher access](#) to it.

These provisions are crucial for holding social media companies accountable for how their design choices and business models impact our kids, our communities, and our democracy. The disclosures enabled by this framework would provide policymakers with high-quality, independently verified information vital to crafting effective solutions and ensure compliance with other tech reform priorities.

As you continue to craft important bills to reign in the practices of Big Tech companies, we, the undersigned organizations and experts, strongly urge you to remember and incorporate the strongest transparency provisions possible. Thank you for your attention to these critical issues.

Sincerely,

American Psychological Association  
Anti-Defamation League  
Brightlines  
Center for Countering Digital Hate

Children and Screens: Institute of Digital Media and Child Development  
Child Mind Institute  
Coalition for Independent Technology Research, Board of Directors  
CrowdTangle  
Institute for Strategic Dialogue  
Issue One  
National Conference on Citizenship

Baobao Zhang, Syracuse University\*  
Cameron Hickey, National Conference on Citizenship  
Connie Moon Sehat, Analysis and Response Toolkit for Trust  
Dean Jackson, Public Circle, LLC  
Dimitri Christakis, University of Washington  
Dr. Emma L. Briant, Monash University  
Francesco Andrea Causio, Società Italiana Intelligenza Artificiale in Medicina  
Ilan Strauss, University College London  
Jonathan Haidt, New York University  
Peter Gerhardstein, Binghamton University-SUNY  
Renee DiResta, Stanford Internet Observatory  
Dr. Toussaint Nothias, New York University  
Yael Eisenstat, Cybersecurity for Democracy

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