

Statement of Representative Suzan DelBene
House Committee on Energy and Commerce Member Day
Tuesday, September 19, 2023

Thank you, Chair McMorris Rodgers and Ranking Member Pallone, for inviting members to testify before the Committee today.

Today, I would like to speak on the urgent need to enact a national data privacy law.

Data privacy is a 21st Century issue of civil rights, civil liberties, and human rights and the U.S. has no policy to protect our most sensitive personal information.

The advancement of artificial intelligence has captured the attention of policy makers and the American public alike. While we certainly should be having discussions around what guardrails need to be in place for sensitive applications and ensuring AI is not developed with biases, we must also make sure data privacy is a central part of that conversation. Privacy policy goes beyond just AI and applies to the many ways the American people interact with technology on a daily basis.

AI needs an immense quantity of data and developers currently do not need to disclose where they get their input data from because the U.S. has no national privacy standard. As a result, we don't even have a clear understanding of how our data is being used to build these systems.

From AI to social media to fitness apps to smart devices, people should be in control of their data. Right now, the companies that collect our information control how it's used.

When we don't have a clear domestic policy, we aren't able to shape standards abroad and we let others drive global policy. We are behind on technology policy already but we are falling further behind as other countries take the lead.

I applaud the Committee for the great work you did in advancing a bipartisan data privacy bill last Congress, but we haven't crossed the finish line yet.

A strong national standard on data privacy has to put people back in control of their information instead of companies. I believe it must also be uniform throughout the country, rather than the state-by-state approach we have now. It must also be enforceable so that the government can hold bad actors accountable.

Privacy protections should not be a one and done thing. We must continually ensure companies are being responsible with the data they have. I appreciated working with the Committee last Congress to strengthen the biannual impact assessments and ensuring the FTC could access these assessments.

I know this Committee shares my sense of urgency on this topic and I look forward to continuing to work with you to build upon the success of last Congress and finally pass a comprehensive data privacy legislation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I yield back the balance of my time.