

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Member Kathy Castor

Markup of 9 Bills, Full Committee

March 5, 2026

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

For years the Energy and Commerce Committee has examined the profound harms of the social media platforms inflict on children and the malign design choices the big tech companies use to maximize engagement and profit at kids' expense. Through hearings, investigations, whistleblower testimony and the voices of families across this country, this committee has learned that these platforms are engineered to capture children's attention, harvest their data and keep them online with disregard to the consequences of their mental health and safety.

That is why it is so troubling that the Republican kids' online safety and privacy bills before us today would actually weaken protections for children. These bills would prevent states from acting as technology evolves, blocking them from responding to new and emerging threats, and they would let social media companies off the hook by allowing them to claim they don't know that children are on their platforms, even though these companies design their products to attract young users and profit from their presence.

Instead of raising standards for children's safety, these bills would lower them. Instead of empowering states to protect kids, they would tie the state's hands, and instead of holding big tech accountable, they would shield companies and corporations from responsibility.

We know this. In 2021 Frances Haugen came before Congress, and she testified that Meta built a business model that prioritizes profit over the safety of its users. Her testimony echoed the tactics of the tobacco industry decades ago, denied the harm, obscure the evidence, and protect the business model at all costs.

What we've learned since then, through Surgeon General reports, John Haidt's best-selling book, we know this. So why are Republicans catering to the big tech companies instead of truly getting back to the bipartisan, strong versions of kids' online safety and privacy bills that we hammered out together in the last Congress?

I think you only have to look at what this Congress has done: the big tech companies had a front row seat at the inauguration; they were able to pass an AI moratorium. This is not the time to turn your back on kids, and people across America are aware of this.

We're not going to stand for weaker bills that put our kid's safety and privacy at risk. And I want to thank the parents who are here, you have been our North Star in working for, as

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Miss Schakowsky said, so much better. You deserve so much better, and we're going to fight for you every step of the way. I yield back my time.