

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Member Alexandria Ocasio Cortez
Markup of 9 Bills, Full Committee

March 5, 2026

Thank you.

I'd like to concur with some of the statements that have been issued today. And I want to, of course, just put my heart out to all of the families of our victims and survivors that are here in the audience today.

This bill, unfortunately, is a lot of some of the most cynical ways that Washington works, which is that we center or at the top of this bill, we will talk about kids and we will say that things are under the guise of the safety of children.

But then when you actually open the hood and look at what's under there, it's being used as a smokescreen for everything that big tech lobbyists want. And what big tech lobbyists want is a national surveillance program where they can harvest the private and personal data of every American with zero actual protections for people and their privacy and victims of some of the most heinous crimes that we've seen in America.

And we don't have to just talk about this as though this is a theoretical issue.

Just a couple of months ago, Discord, a platform where a lot of kids have been targeted and put in danger, mind you, tried to roll out this idea of a "data verification" or an "age verification" technique, but what they - but they did it in this way that was also very emblematic of what we're against here today.

They contracted out to a third-party private company to do facial scanning of not just kids, but also adults. And mind you, Discord has over 200 million users every month.

They decided to launch a "teen default" setting where they will lock you into a, quote unquote, what they call a "teen appropriate experience," which means you can't access certain content which, mind you, if you are an adult that does not opt in, you then get cordoned off into the teen experience. Explain to me how that has anything to do with children's safety. And then if- the only way to get out of that censored version is by scanning your face.

But what's more shocking is that Discord made the decision to move forward with this after they had been hacked, and at least seven, 70,000 users had their data stolen. So, I don't see even on the other side of this, kids were not protected, but a lot of people's privacy was violated.

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And I want to, once again, express my heartfelt condolences to all the advocates here. And I do believe that we can both protect Americans safety and protect kids. This package, unfortunately, does not do that. And we want to get to a place where we, of course, protect victims and ensure the privacy of every American is honored as well.

Thank you. And I yield back.