



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, & TRANSPORTATION

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Executive Session

July 27, 2022

Opening Statement

[VIDEO](#)

CANTWELL: We are here today to talk and pass legislation on two important bills that would keep children and teens safer online.

The Committee has heard compelling testimony from pediatricians, privacy experts, federal privacy enforcers, academics, whistleblower Frances Haugen, all who have come to us with the same message—that many online platforms, including some social media platforms, are designing in their products that are detrimental to the mental and even physical health of our nation’s kids and teens.

And some platforms are doing so knowingly, abusing the data of children for profit—sorting and profiling them before they reach the age of 13, when existing privacy protections under the Children’s Online Privacy [Protection] Act, COPPA, cut off.

In response to these calls for action, we’re marking up legislation by two of our colleagues, Senators Markey’s, Lummis’ and Blumenthal’s Children and Teens’ Online Privacy Protection [Act] to make much-needed updates to the existing baseline of COPPA, instead of just covering children [13] and under, it would now be seventeen and under.

And among other crucial provisions of this bill, it ensures that all minors—not just those under-13—are protected, and establishes protections for teens.

This bill would close a loophole that has been allowing companies to abuse the data of children with little accountability, making it harder for the FTC to prove violations.

I want to thank Senator Markey for his leadership not just now but 24 years ago when the original legislation was enacted.

I also want to thank our colleagues for the Kids Online Safety Act, KOSA, from Senators Blumenthal, Blackburn, Markey, Capito, Lujan, and Baldwin.

Among other important protections, KOSA includes a duty of loyalty that obligates platforms to prevent harms to minors, establishes safeguards for minors in their use of platforms, and includes important transparency requirements.

This bill would also provide a way for researchers to study the effects of platforms on children and teens.

I want to thank Senator Blumenthal for his leadership on that legislation and conducting the hearings with Senator Blackburn. They were quite effective in illuminating the challenges we are facing today, so thank you for that leadership.

Today we are also considering several nominees to fill key roles and provide necessary leadership to implement historic legislation to elevate transportation security, expand assistance and opportunities for minority-owned businesses, and improve research security, innovation, and technology.

We will first consider the nomination of Administrator David Pekoske for a second term to lead the Transportation Security Administration (“TSA”).

Mr. Pekoske’s continued leadership will help TSA counter emerging threats, reduce waiting times at security and screening stations, and rebuild a workforce that ensures high pay and benefit for its employees.

If confirmed, Administrator Pekoske would be the first TSA administrator to serve two terms. His prior work and experience in the Coast Guard has served him well in leading the Agency, which will continue to face evolving challenges.

Next, we will consider the nomination of Ms. Susie Feliz to be Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Department of Commerce.

Ms. Feliz's leadership at the Department of Commerce will help implement programs that are key to bolstering domestic manufacturing, workforce development, broadband expansion, and innovation in advanced technology fields.

Her experience working on Capitol Hill and advocating for economic empowerment at the National Urban League, and working in a bipartisan manner, among all levels of government, will ensure greater success of these programs.

Next, we will consider the nomination of Donald Cravins, Jr., to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Minority Business Development.

This historic nomination is a newly created position that will elevate the critical importance of Minority Business Development Agency's mission to expand opportunities for minority-owned businesses.

Mr. Cravins' experience working with the private sector, non-profit organizations, and the federal government is the right blend of talent, to make such a success in this operation where we have said we want to expand the minority-owned business opportunities across the United States.

I am excited to see Mr. Cravins at the helm of this organization and implement these new responsibilities.

Lastly, hopefully, we will consider Dr. Arati Prabhakar to be Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy. This nomination is of monumental importance, putting a woman of color at the helm of the OSTP for the first time in the agency's history.

Dr. Prabhakar is supremely qualified, having previously served as Director for both NIST and DARPA; two federal Research and Development agencies at the forefront of scientific innovation and technology advancement. Her proven leadership and accomplishments at these agencies will be of great service to the OSTP.

At DARPA, she led the program that prototyped a system for detecting nuclear and radiological materials before a terrorist can build a bomb, and developed tools to find human trafficking networks on the internet, and enabled complex military systems to work together even when they were not originally designed to do so.

While at NIST, she took the Manufacturing Extension Partnership to national scale to boost the competitiveness of small- and mid-size manufacturers.

While I am happy to see another accomplished woman at the forefront of the federal government's scientific community, I am just as heartened by her commitment to put people at OSTP first, and I am pleased to support her nomination.

If confirmed, she will be tasked with elevating OSTP's role to ensure the U.S. remain a global leader in STEM, increasing investments in R&D, promote greater diversity in the sciences, improve our weather forecasting capabilities, and protecting our scientific research.

The nominees before us today are crucial to our economy and national security, and I hope we can confirm them quickly.