

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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Opening Statement

Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney

Hearing on “Facial Recognition Technology (Part III):

Ensuring Commercial Transparency and Accuracy

January 15, 2020

Today, the Committee is holding our third hearing this Congress on a critical issue: facial recognition technology.

It is clear that, despite the private sector’s expanded use of the technology, it is just not ready for prime time.

During this hearing, we will examine the private sector’s development, use, and sale of the technology, as well as its partnerships with government entities using this technology.

We learned from our first hearing on May 22 of 2019 that the use of facial recognition technology can severely impact Americans’ civil rights and liberties, including the right to privacy, free speech, and equal protection under the law.

We learned during our second hearing on June 4 how federal, state, and local government entities use this technology on a wide scale, yet provide very little transparency on how and why it is being used—or on security measures to protect sensitive data.

Despite these concerns, we see facial recognition technology being used more and more in our everyday lives.

The technology is being used in schools, grocery stores, airports, malls, theme parks, stadiums, and on our phones, social media platforms, doorbell camera footage, and even in hiring decisions.

This technology is completely unregulated at the federal level, resulting in some questionable and even dangerous applications.

In December 2019, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, or NIST, issued a new report finding that commercial facial recognition algorithms misidentified racial minorities, women, children, and elderly individuals at substantially higher rates.

I look forward to discussing this study with Dr. Romine, the Director of NIST’s Information Technology Laboratory, who is joining us today.

I also look forward to hearing from our expert panel hailing from academia, industry, and the advocacy community on recommended actions policy makers should take to address potential consumer harm based on these findings.

Our examination of facial recognition technology is a bipartisan effort. I applaud Ranking Member Jordan's tireless and ongoing advocacy on this issue.

We have a responsibility to not only encourage innovation, but to protect the privacy and safety of American consumers.

That means educating our fellow Members and the American people on the different uses of the technology and distinguishing between local, subjective, identification, and surveillance uses.

That also means exploring what protections are currently in place to protect civil rights, consumer privacy, and data security and prevent misidentifications, as well as providing recommendations for future legislation and regulation.

In that vein, I would like to announce today that our Committee is committed to introducing and marking-up common-sense facial recognition legislation in the near future.

And our hope is that we can do that on a truly bipartisan basis.

With that, I recognize the Ranking Member for his opening statement.

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