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**Committee:** Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee  
**Event:** [Oversight of the Federal Trade Commission](#)  
**Date:** April 15, 2026

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***Executive Summary:***

On April 15, 2026, the Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee held an oversight hearing on the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). While the hearing covered a wide range of issues, this readout summarizes those most relevant to Internet Works member companies.

- Senators and witnesses discussed protecting children online as well as current gaps in the FTC’s authority over artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots. Witnesses emphasized the continued enforcement of existing laws like the *Children's Online Privacy Protection Act* (COPPA) rather than expanding new authority.
- Witnesses stressed a cautious, “study-first” approach to AI oversight, arguing the FTC should not act as a broad AI regulator but instead target clear harms such as fraud.
- The discussion also highlighted support for a national data privacy framework over state-by-state rules and criticism of the EU’s comprehensive AI regulatory model as potentially stifling innovation.

***Member Toplines:***

[Chair Ted Cruz \(R-TX\)](#): Cruz highlighted concerns around emerging technologies, pointing to congressional efforts to involve the FTC in regulating digital privacy, AI, and online platforms, including the *TAKE IT DOWN Act* aimed at addressing harms from deepfake exploitation. He also pointed to bipartisan interest in strengthening consumer protections against scams and harmful online practices.

[Ranking Member Maria Cantwell \(D-WA\)](#): Cantwell criticized the administration for undermining the FTC’s independence by removing commissioners, arguing this weakened bipartisan oversight. She emphasized the FTC’s role in addressing deceptive practices, including cases involving the misuse of consumer data.

***Witness Toplines:***

[Andrew Ferguson, Chairman, FTC](#): Ferguson highlighted the FTC’s aggressive enforcement of consumer protection and antitrust laws, emphasizing actions to promote competition. He underscored efforts to protect kids online safety and digital privacy through the enforcement of COPPA and the *TAKE IT DOWN Act*. Ferguson also pointed to actions against anti-competitive conduct across industries, while emphasizing the FTC’s role in addressing unfair practices in increasingly digital and AI-driven markets.

*Mark Meador, Commissioner, FTC*<sup>1</sup>: Meador emphasized the FTC's dual mission to protect consumers and promote competition. He urged Congress to restore the FTC's authority to obtain monetary remedies, arguing it is essential to deter misconduct and protect consumers.

**Major Takeaways:**

- Sen. **Marsha Blackburn** (R-TN) highlighted the *Kids Online Safety Act's* ([S. 1748](#)) critical role in keeping kids safe online and urged Congress to pass the bill.
- Sen. **Andy Kim** (D-NJ) asked Meador where the gaps in FTC authority are regarding AI chatbots and protecting children online. Meador commended Congress for passing the *Take It Down Act* and committed to alerting Congress to any statutory gaps discovered through the FTC's 6(b) [inquiry](#) into the use of AI chatbots.
  - Ferguson emphasized that the study is ongoing and will eventually lead to a public report. He argued for a “study-first” approach as opposed to rushing into enforcement actions, contrasting the FTC's posture with the European model.
- Ferguson cited COPPA enforcement as one of the FTC's “principal priorities” and referenced major cases against Disney involving how it was labelling videos on YouTube and then using children's data. He described the case as part of the FTC's effort to enforce existing law in the AI and digital space, rather than creating new regulatory authority.
- Cruz referenced the debate over whether the FTC should regulate the “totality of the internet through sweeping data privacy rules,” treating it as an example of Congress inappropriately delegating broad authority without sufficient guardrails.
  - Separately, Ferguson argued Congress should create a “national framework governing data privacy,” rather than allowing a patchwork of state laws.
- Blackburn asked the witnesses how the FTC would balance protecting consumers from AI harms while fostering innovation. She specifically asked how recent court decisions in New Mexico and California on platform safety-by-design inform FTC enforcement.
  - Ferguson stated the FTC should “not become the general all-purpose AI regulator,” calling it inconsistent with existing law. Instead, he described the FTC's AI enforcement philosophy as targeting AI as a tool for fraud.
  - Ferguson criticized the *EU's AI Act* for stifling innovation, arguing it is overly comprehensive, premature, and too generalized in its approach to regulation.

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<sup>1</sup> The opening remarks of Commissioner Meador were unavailable at the time of this memo's distribution.