U.S. Senator John Hickenlooper

Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety and Data Security

Hearing: "The Need for Transparency in Artificial Intelligence"

September 12, 2023

<u>Opening Statement As Delivered</u>
<u>VIDEO</u>

The Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety, and Data Security will now come to order. While Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been part of our lives for years and years, its newer forms have now captured, it's fair to say, the world's attention. We're now far beyond the era of asking "Alexa" to play a song or Siri to dial our spouse. These are examples of "Narrow-AI". ChatGPT and new Generative AI-systems can now plan a custom travel itinerary, create artwork, remix a song, and help you write computer code. It's obvious that AI is a powerful technology that will revolutionize our economy.

Just like the first car or personal computer, AI is a transformative technology that has both benefits and risks for consumers. That means we have to proceed with intention and care. Our goal today is to identify how we do that. Specifically we need to: Begin to help Americans understand AI's capabilities and limitations, to reduce AI's potential risks relative to consumers; and to increase the public's trust in AI systems through transparency.

The fact that we need to be careful with AI doesn't negate how important it is. Or the massive potential it has to transform our lives. From helping with your tedious daily tasks to helping doctors properly diagnose and find the right treatments for an illness, the possibilities go beyond what we can imagine today – far beyond. But we must also confront the fact that AI can be misused by bad actors. AI can be used to make scams, fraud, and cyberattacks more harmful and more effective.

Companies developing and deploying AI, we believe, have a role to build a safe, secure, and reliable system that, over time, will earn the trust of the public. Congress will play a role by setting reasonable rules of the road to inform and protect consumers. The federal government, academia, and private sector will all need to work together to establish thoughtful AI Policy.

In April, Senator Blackburn and I sent a letter to tech companies asking how they are adopting the NIST AI Risk Management Framework. The responses showed how the

framework is helping companies build accountability, transparency, and fairness into their products. Today, Senator Thune and I sent a letter to the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to stress the importance of developing federal standards to help consumers understand and identify AI-generated content. This is going to be more critical for building trust as AI expands into larger and larger aspects of our lives.

Several other federal AI initiatives are currently underway. To name a few: The White House has convened leading tech companies - bringing people together to build a shared understanding and a voluntary commitment to build trustworthy AI systems. NIST formed a public Generative AI Working Group to build on its AI Risk Management Framework. Also the National AI Initiative Office is coordinating a whole-of-government effort to develop AI safety and transparency with input from experts in civil society, in academia, and the private sector. We are fortunate to have two NAIAC members as witnesses here today. These are all encouraging steps but it doesn't mean we're done when it comes to making sure we've created a framework in which AI will be safe and transparent for consumers

The AI-powered future comes with many challenges that we can already see: Building a talented STEM-trained workforce, providing efficient computing power, and ensuring that we protect consumer data privacy.

We know that AI trains on publicly available data and this data can be collected from everyday consumers, everywhere, in all parts of their lives. There are too many open questions about what rights people have to their own data and how it's used. Which is why Congress needs to pass comprehensive data privacy protections. This will empower consumers, creators, and help us grow our modern AI-enabled economy.

This issue is complicated and is going to require bipartisanship to acquire results. Committees across Congress are examining AI's impact on society through different lenses. Each hearing is an invitation for policymakers and families at dinner tables across America to think about how AI will impact their everyday lives. Today's discussion is that next step as we work towards building what ultimately will become, hopefully, a global consensus. This committee is well positioned to examine all of these important issues with the goal of promoting transparency, and the goal of creating an AI system that consumers will have confidence in.

 I'd like to welcome each of our witnesses who are joining us today: Mrs. Victoria Espinel, CEO, Business Software Alliance (BSA), Dr. Ramayya Krishnan, Dean of the College of Information Systems, Carnegie Mellon University, Mr. Sam Gregory, Executive Director, WITNESS, Mr. Rob Strayer, Executive Vice President for Policy, Information Technology Industry Council (ITI). I'd now like to recognize Ranking Member Blackburn for her opening remarks.