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Strictly Personal and Confidential – Via USPS Certified Mail

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

Re: Banning TikTok (H.R. 7521)

This is a plea from a 229-member monthly non-partisan public-policy study/action group that I have facilitated for the past 19 years. Its participants from around the country include many attorneys and professors.

During our Zoom meeting this past Wednesday, we focused on H.R. 7521 (Banning TikTok) whose text is available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/7521/text>.

As you are probably aware, it was passed by an overwhelming 352-65 vote by your House colleagues on 3/13/2024 and assigned to your Committee the following day.

You might be aware that H.R. 7520 (Protecting Americans' Data from Foreign Adversaries Act) received an official welcome on your Committee's website on 3/20/2024, the day your Committee received it, which said –

“Data brokers' sale of Americans' most sensitive information to our foreign adversaries is wrong and damages our national security. I'm encouraged by this bipartisan effort by Representatives McMorris Rodgers and Pallone to protect Americans' personal data – especially that of our servicemembers – from being exploited by foreign adversaries.”

In stark contrast, your Committee's website discloses that you and your colleagues have treated H.R. 7521 (Banning TikTok) like a case of leprosy, shunning it without so much as a single kind word much less a hearing –

- Despite the overwhelming 352-65 vote by your House colleagues;
- Despite President Biden's widely-reported pledge to sign it into law if it reaches his desk; and
- Despite its importance infinitely dwarfing that of H.R. 7520 (Protecting Americans' Data from Foreign Adversaries).

After all, you must be aware that since its introduction in 2017 –

- TikTok has become the most-powerful communication platform for reaching young people around the globe.
- TikTok prides itself in being (and, indeed, markets itself to American children as) a SECRET “parent free” website that the child's parents are not able to monitor or even be aware of the child's usage.
- TikTok's messaging is “precision communication” specific to the particular child based on the philosophy that to persuade a group, TikTok needs to make their propaganda messaging unique to each member of that group.
- Unlike the 24/7 addictive powers of the American version of TikTok, the version available in China –
 - Is limited to 40 minutes/day of usage; and
 - Unlike the propaganda permeating the American version, the Chinese version features such things as science experiments you can do at home, museum exhibits, patriotism videos and educational videos.

We urge you and your colleagues to show courage and honesty by reporting H.R. 7521 to the floor unanimously.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

John S. Karls
JD, Harvard Law School, 1967
Who's Who in American Law, 1988-2003
Who's Who in America, 1988-2003
Who's Who in the World, 1994-2003

Cc: An identical letter has been sent to each of your Commerce Committee Colleagues