

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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### Opening Statement Vice-Chair Jimmy Gomez As prepared for delivery 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 facial recognition technology.

You’re going to hear a lot of technical terms and wonky debates. We will ask witnesses about algorithms, false positives, and breaches of biometric data.

But to ground our purpose, I want to make this simple, and I want to make it easy for the American people to understand: the powers of this new technology have profound implications, particularly if the technology is misused.

This is personal for me, and is personal for each American.

In 2018, the ACLU tested Amazon’s facial recognition system. That Amazon system matched my face with the photo of someone previously arrested for a crime.

To be clear, I have never been arrested. However, to Amazon’s system, that did not matter. Its algorithm incorrectly matched my face to the face of someone who had been previously arrested.

Let me ask you this—if a police officer is using Amazon’s system, and they match my face with someone that had just robbed a bank, let’s say there’s an outstanding warrant out on that mismatched face—wouldn’t it make sense to arrest me?

Amazon has been unwilling to submit its facial recognition system for accuracy testing with NIST, the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Dr. Charles Romine from NIST is here with us today. If certain companies aren’t even bothering to submit their tools for accuracy testing, how are we to know if faces like mine, or yours, or your neighbor’s, or your friend’s, won’t be mistakenly matched and identified as someone else’s?

Maybe you're not worried about getting arrested. But certainly you know kids in schools, have gone to a mall, go to the airport, or live in an apartment. These are all spaces where this technology is used. If we don't regulate the bounds of this technology, we may face unwanted consequences.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses on how we can regulate this technology effectively. I yield back.

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