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Ranking Member Gerald E. Connolly Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation Hearing on “White House Overreach on AI” March 21, 2024

AI helps doctors optimize medical treatments, scientists predict potential natural disasters, and federal workers manage water supplies. And yet we know every scientific and technological advancement comes with risks.

The Biden-Harris Executive Order on AI, the first of its kind in the history of this nation, elegantly balances innovation with equity—and potential with pragmatism.

AI has already demonstrated massive and consequential effects on workforces and economies across this globe. The Biden-Harris EO sets America on a path to lead the world in ethical, equitable, and transparent use of AI. As we enter this second hearing exploring the Biden-Harris EO, it’s good to remember what our previous witnesses have testified.

“The AI EO and OMB memo are important steps. They’re focused on AI safety, investment, talent, and leadership [and] are critical for America to lead in AI innovation and governance. But the executive branch cannot achieve this goal fully without Congress.”

Here’s another:

“In sum, the AI EO and OMB memo have taken a big first step, but it is only one step on the longer journey. Congress must now take it.”

Here’s one more:

“The executive order recognizes the importance of the AI risk management framework developed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology. We encourage the Administration to ensure that framework anchors the government’s risk management efforts.”

These quotes all come from majority picked witnesses and agree that the Biden-Harris Executive Order promotes safe and responsible AI and puts us on the right path for a strong AI future in the United States. But they also recognize that Congress has more work to do.

Just last week, we had a hearing on deepfakes and learned how some AI training datasets contain known images of child sex abuse materials. As a result, AI models trained off this data can further perpetuate the creation of additional horrible and shocking content. This example is just one way AI technology can cause harm when we allow it to go unchecked.

So how should we respond? As we've noted, the Biden-Harris Administration's October 2023 Executive Order initiated a whole-of-government and private sector approach to establish the United States as a global leader in ethical AI.

Within the federal government, the EO directed more than 50 federal agencies to take more than 100 actions to guarantee responsible federal use in the over 700 use cases already implemented across 24 federal agencies. Every agency should now have a designated Chief AI Officer and internal AI Governance Board, which should work cohesively to manage the risks of AI while prudently removing barriers to innovation.

In addition to the EO, the President established a Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights to guide equitable use of AI across the public and private sectors. It was another key step to ensure that every new technology comes with guarantees of civil rights, civil liberties, privacy, and equal opportunity. This Blueprint also included private industry input from companies like Amazon, Anthropic, Google, Inflection, Microsoft, and OpenAI, each of whom committed to strengthening safety, security, and transparency as they innovate new AI algorithms and explore potential use cases for the technology. As the federal government continues to explore AI we should look to partner with private sector partners to foster continued innovation and adoption of secure and trustworthy AI.

I also plan to introduce a bill that responsibly accelerates the use of AI by our civil servants who are entrusted with carrying out our public facing agencies' missions.

AI must empower workers, not replace them. We can achieve this future if we build a robust educational foundation right now—one that benefits both government and the private sector.

Therefore, Congress must also invest in programs that educate and train the next generation of skilled AI workers, so they can thrive in a tech economy. Both the private and public sector will need “digital native” workers who are steeped in the practices needed to put appropriate guiderails in place to help AI achieve new feats.

Some of my colleagues and witnesses here today will say that regulation limits innovation, and stifles growth. But let me remind you of what our previous witness Dr. Rumman Chowdhury, a responsible AI fellow at Harvard, said, “brakes help you drive faster.”

This country has a strong history of creating rules of the road for innovative industries in ways that catalyze growth and foster trust in consumers. We look forward to exploring how we strike that balance with our witnesses.

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