

Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing
“Protecting Our Children Online”
Questions for the Record
for John Pizzuro
Submitted February 21, 2023

1. Please describe your preferred legislative changes, if any, to the federal immunity granted under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996 (47 U.S.C. § 230).

There needs to be more accountability within the existing Section 230 Framework. My concern is that if we eliminate immunity, which needs to be changed to make these companies liable for how their platform is used, they will go to end-to-end encryption, thus putting more children in danger.

To receive immunity, social media companies would have to ensure specific remedies are taken place on their platforms, including but not limited to; age verification, identity verification, and AI scanning. We can also require scanning an operating system or browser on the device for CSAM, Grooming, etc.

Judiciary Committee Hearing: Protecting Our Children Online

February 14, 2023

Questions for the Record

Senator Peter Welch

Questions for Mr. John Pizzuro

Big tech companies are exacerbating the fentanyl crisis—they've turned a blind eye to folks selling drugs on their platforms, giving dealers an easy way to reach buyers online. That's a particular problem for our kids, who can easily buy dangerous drugs through social media platforms.

1. When you served in the New Jersey State Police Department, what challenges did you or your colleagues face in preventing, identifying, and catching these transactions on social media?

Social Media companies themselves. Drug Trafficking Organizations, Cartels, and even independent drug traffickers have transitioned to social media apps and games relying on their chat features instead of using the phone to conduct their business. Law Enforcement is unable to monitor these platforms even with legal processes. End to End Encryption protects companies from the content on their platforms.

If I were a Mexican Cartel, for example, that traffics Fentanyl, I would rely explicitly on social media to conduct my business. I can communicate without fear of getting caught because these companies protect their users' privacy and, without any moderation, on these platforms allowing Drug Trafficking Organizations the ability to evade detection.

2. What steps should Congress take to make it harder for people to market drugs to kids online?

Identify appropriate agencies or task forces for proactive operations targeting platforms and Drug Trafficking Organizations. Social media companies must actively scan for known drug terms via chat to help identify traffickers and victims.

There also needs to be the dangers of social media curriculum in all schools, including the manner of methods of drugs, child sexual abuse material, and human trafficking. These programs should be mandated at a young age and maybe even a disclaimer or warning label with every purchase or downloadable app.

Questions from Senator Tillis

for John Pizzuro, CEO of Raven

As you know, in 2021, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) cyber tipline received 29 million reports of suspected online child sexual exploitation- child sexual abuse material (CSAM). In your experience how long does it take to review each cyber tipline report?

Possible review scenarios:

1. Review → no action 5-10 minutes
2. Review → Assignment 10-15 minutes
3. Review → Legal action 30 minutes

This, of course, adds no consideration for actual investigative work. Rather, this accounts for initial triage and the request for further actionable information. If you take NC, as an example they average 56 tips per day if you include weekends which amounts to 6 hours a day just reviewing the non-action ones.

Are there certain States that are receiving a higher volume of cyber tipline reports than others? If so, why are their volumes higher?

Every state has had a 100% increase year to year. The numbers are proportionate to the population of a given state. As an example, Meta is responsible for 98% of tips, and Apple is 0%, so sometimes there is a spike of tips in a certain state due to a particular service provider or VPN.

What resources and tools do our law enforcement need to efficiently and effectively review the cyber tipline reports?

Dedicated staffing and more funding to purchase technological solutions such as automation tools and AI integration. Currently, automation tools are around 300k which usually is close to the entire ICAC budget. These tools can significantly increase efficiency and reduce the backlog.

We also need help to identify legal and technical methods to reduce exposure and/or access to children that are device-based and app-based.