117TH CONGRESS 1ST SESSION

H. R. 3849

To promote competition, lower entry barriers, and reduce switching costs for consumers and businesses online.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

June 11, 2021

Ms. Scanlon (for herself, Mr. Owens, Mr. Cicilline, Mr. Buck, and Mr. Nadler) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To promote competition, lower entry barriers, and reduce switching costs for consumers and businesses online.

- 1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
- 2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
- 3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
- 4 This Act may be cited as the "Augmenting Compat-
- 5 ibility and Competition by Enabling Service Switching Act
- 6 of 2021" or the "ACCESS Act of 2021".
- 7 SEC. 2. UNFAIR METHOD OF COMPETITION.
- 8 A violation of this Act, or standards issued pursuant
- 9 to this Act, by a person, partnership, or corporation oper-
- 10 ating a covered platform, in or affecting commerce, shall

- 1 be an unfair method of competition in violation of section
- 2 5(a)(1) of the Federal Trade Commission Act (15 U.S.C.
- 3 45).

4 SEC. 3. PORTABILITY.

- 5 (a) IN GENERAL.—A covered platform shall maintain
- 6 a set of transparent, third-party-accessible interfaces (in-
- 7 cluding application programming interfaces) to enable the
- 8 secure transfer of data to a user, or with the affirmative
- 9 consent of a user, to a business user at the direction of
- 10 a user, in a structured, commonly used, and machine-read-
- 11 able format that complies with the standards issued pursu-
- 12 ant to section 6(c).

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13 (b) Data Security.—

- (1) In general.—A competing business or a potential competing business that receives ported user data from a covered platform shall reasonably secure any user data it acquires, and shall take reasonable steps to avoid introducing security risks to data or the covered platform's information systems.
 - (2) VIOLATION.—A failure to comply with this section is a violation of this Act and subject to the enforcement under sections 9 and 10 of this Act.
 - (3) TERMINATION OF ACCESS.—The Commission may require the covered platform to cease the transfer of data to a competing or potentially com-

- 1 peting business that the Commission finds has vio-
- 2 lated this section or standards adopted by the Com-
- 3 mission under section 6(c) of this Act.
- 4 (c) Portability Obligations.—In order to achieve
- 5 portability under subsection (a), a covered platform shall
- 6 comply with the standards issued under section 6(c) by
- 7 the Commission.

8 SEC. 4. INTEROPERABILITY.

- 9 (a) In General.—A covered platform shall maintain
- 10 a set of transparent, third-party-accessible interfaces (in-
- 11 cluding application programming interfaces) to facilitate
- 12 and maintain interoperability with a competing business
- 13 or a potential competing business that complies with the
- 14 standards issued pursuant to section 6(c).

15 (b) Data Security.—

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potential competing business that accesses an interoperability interface of a covered platform shall reasonably secure any user data it acquires, processes.

(1) IN GENERAL.—A competing business or a

- sonably secure any user data it acquires, processes,
- or transmits, and shall take reasonable steps to
- 21 avoid introducing security risks to user data or the
- covered platform's information systems.
- 23 (2) VIOLATION.—A failure to comply with this
- section is a violation of this Act and subject to the
- enforcement under sections 9 and 10 of this Act.

- 1 (3) TERMINATION OF ACCESS.—The Commis-2 sion may require the covered platform to cease inter-3 operating with a competing or potentially competing 4 business that the Commission finds has violated this 5 section or standards adopted by the Commission 6 under section 6(c) of this Act.
- 7 (c) Interoperability Obligations.—In order to 8 achieve interoperability under subsection (a), a covered 9 platform shall comply with the standards issued under section 6(c) by the Commission.
- 11 (d) SECURITY AND PRIVACY STANDARDS.—Con12 sistent with standards issued by the Commission under
 13 section 6(c) of this Act, a covered platform shall set pri14 vacy and security standards for access by competing busi15 nesses or potential competing businesses to the extent rea16 sonably necessary to address a threat to the covered plat17 form or user data, and shall report any suspected viola18 tions of those standards to the Commission.

(e) Prohibited Changes to Interfaces.—

(1) Commission approval.—A covered platform may make a change that may affect its interoperability interface by petitioning the Commission
to approve a proposed change. The Commission shall
allow the change if, after consulting with the relevant technical committee the Commission concludes

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- that the change is not being made with the purpose or effect of unreasonably denying access or undermining interoperability for competing businesses or potential competing businesses.
- (2) EXCEPTION.—A covered platform may make a change affecting its interoperability interfaces without receiving approval from the Commission if that change is necessary to address a security vulnerability or other exigent circumstance that creates an imminent risk to user privacy or security if the change is narrowly tailored to the vulnerability and does not have the purpose or effect of unreasonably denying access or undermining interoperability for competing businesses or potential competing businesses.

(3) Interface information.—

(A) In GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the adoption of a rule by the Commission under section 6(c) of this Act, a covered platform shall provide to competing businesses or potential competing businesses complete and accurate documentation describing access to the interoperability interface required under this section.

- 1 (B) Contents.—The documentation re-2 quired under subparagraph (A) is limited to 3 interface documentation necessary to achieve 4 development and operation of interoperable 5 products and services.
 - (4) Notice of changes.—A covered platform shall provide reasonable advance notice to a competing business or a potential competing business, which may be provided through public notice, of any change to an interoperability interface maintained by the covered platform that will affect the interoperability of a competing business or a potential competing business.

(f) Data Minimization.—

- (1) Non-commercialization by a covered platform shall not collect, use, or share user data obtained from a business user through the interoperability interface except for the purposes of safeguarding the privacy and security of such information or maintaining interoperability of services.
- (2) Non-commercialization of data on a covered platform except for the purposes of safeguarding

1	and security of such data or maintaining interoper-
2	ability of services.
3	SEC. 5. DEFINITIONS.
4	In this Act:
5	(1) Person.—The term "person" has the
6	meaning given the term in subsection (a) of section
7	1 of the Clayton Act (15 U.S.C. 12).
8	(2) Affirmative express consent.—The
9	term "affirmative express consent" means an affirm-
10	ative action of the consumer to make a choice fol-
11	lowing a clear and conspicuous disclosure to the con-
12	sumer, separate and apart from any "privacy pol-
13	icy", "terms of service", "terms of service", "con-
14	sent for research", or other similar document, of—
15	(A) the types of Personal Information that
16	Respondent will disclose to third parties;
17	(B) the reason for such disclosures;
18	(C) the identity of all such third parties;
19	(D) any opportunities consumers have to
20	decline or rescind consent for such disclosures;
21	and
22	(E) how consumers may exercise any such
23	opportunities.
24	An affirmative action does not include obtaining a
25	consumer's approval for a preselected default option.

- (3) CLEAR AND CONSPICUOUS DISCLOSURE.—
 The term "clear and conspicuous disclosure" means that a required disclosure is difficult to miss such that it is easily noticeable and easily understandable by ordinary consumers, including in all of the following ways:
 - (A) In any communication that is solely visual or solely audible, the disclosure must be made through the same means through which the communication is presented. In any communication made through both visual and audible means, such as a television advertisement, the disclosure must be presented simultaneously in both the visual and audible portions of the communication even if the representation requiring the disclosure ("triggering representation") is made through only one means.
 - (B) A visual disclosure, by its size, contrast, location, the length of time it appears, and other characteristics, must stand out from any accompanying text or other visual elements so that it is easily noticed, read, and understood.
 - (C) An audible disclosure, including by telephone or streaming video, must be delivered

1	in a volume, speed, and cadence sufficient for
2	ordinary consumers to easily hear and under-
3	stand it.
4	(D) In any communication using an inter-
5	active electronic medium, such as the Internet
6	or software, the disclosure must be unavoidable
7	(E) The disclosure must use diction and
8	syntax understandable to ordinary consumers
9	and must appear in each language in which the
10	triggering representation appears.
11	(F) The disclosure must comply with these
12	requirements in each medium through which is
13	is received, including all electronic devices and
14	face-to-face communications.
15	(G) The disclosure must not be contra
16	dicted or mitigated by, or inconsistent with
17	anything else in the communication.
18	(H) When the representation or sales prac
19	tice targets a specific audience, such as chil-
20	dren, the elderly, or the terminally ill, "ordinary
21	consumers" includes reasonable members of
22	that group.
23	(4) Commission.—The term "Commission"

means the Federal Trade Commission.

1	(5) Control.—The term "control" with re-
2	spect to a person means—
3	(A) holding 25 percent or more of the
4	stock of the person;
5	(B) having the right to 25 percent or more
6	of the profits of the person;
7	(C) having the right to 25 percent or more
8	of the assets of the person, in the event of the
9	person's dissolution;
10	(D) if the person is a corporation, having
11	the power to designate 25 percent or more of
12	the directors of the person;
13	(E) if the person is a trust, having the
14	power to designate 25 percent or more of the
15	trustees; or
16	(F) otherwise exercises substantial control
17	over the person.
18	(6) COVERED PLATFORM.—The term "covered
19	platform" means an online platform—
20	(A) that has been designated as a "covered
21	platform" under section 6(a); or
22	(B) that—
23	(i) at the time of the Commission's or
24	the Department of Justice's designation
25	under section 2(d), or any of the twelve

1	months preceding that time, or in any of
2	the 12 months preceding the filing of a
3	complaint for an alleged violation of this
4	Act—
5	(I) has at least 50,000,000
6	United States-based monthly active
7	users on the online platform; or
8	(II) has at least 100,000 United
9	States-based monthly active business
10	users on the platform;
11	(ii) is owned or controlled by a person
12	with net annual sales, or a market capital-
13	ization greater than \$600,000,000,000, ad-
14	justed for inflation on the basis of the
15	Consumer Price Index, at the time of the
16	Commission's or the Department of Jus-
17	tice's designation under section 6(a) or any
18	of the two years preceding that time, or at
19	any time in the 2 years preceding the filing
20	of a complaint for an alleged violation of
21	this Act; and
22	(iii) is a critical trading partner for
23	the sale or provision of any product or
24	service offered on or directly related to the
25	online platform.

1 (7) COVERED PLATFORM OPERATOR 2 term "covered platform operator" means a property of that, directly or indirectly, owns or controls at ered platform. 4 ered platform. 5 (8) CRITICAL TRADING PARTNER.—The "critical trading partner" means a trading partner that has the ability to restrict or impede—	erson a cov- term artner
that, directly or indirectly, owns or controls a ered platform. (8) Critical trading partner" means a trading partner that has the ability to restrict or impede—	term
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6 "critical trading partner" means a trading partner that has the ability to restrict or impede—	artner
7 that has the ability to restrict or impede—	
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8 (A) the access of a business user	00 100
9 users or customers; or	
(B) the access of a business user to	a tool
or service that it needs to effectively ser	ve its
users or customers.	
(9) Data.—	
(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later th	an 6
months after the date of enactment of thi	s Act,
the Commission shall adopt rules in accor	dance
with section 553 of title 5, United States	Code,
to define the term "data" for the purpe	ose of
implementing and enforcing this Act.	
20 (B) Data.—The term "data" shall in	nclude
information that is collected by or provide	led to
a covered platform or competing business	s or a
potential competing business that is link	_

reasonably linkable, to a specific user, user de-

vice, or customer of the covered platform or a

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1	competing business or a potential competing	
2	business.	
3	(C) Exclusion.—The term "data" shall	
4	not include proprietary data that does not per-	
5	tain to the user or a user device of the covered	
6	platform. The Commission shall narrowly con-	
7	strue the term "proprietary data" for the pur-	
8	poses of this Act.	
9	(10) Business user.—The term "business	
10	user" means a person that utilizes or plans to utilize	
11	the covered platform for the sale or provision of	
12	products or services.	
13	(11) Interoperability interface.—The	
14	term "interoperability interface" means an electronic	
15	interface maintained by a covered platform for pur-	
16	poses of achieving interoperability.	
17	(12) Online Platform.—The term "online	
18	platform" means a website, online or mobile applica-	
19	tion, operating system, digital assistant, or online	
20	service that—	
21	(A) enables a user to generate content that	
22	can be viewed by other users on the platform or	
23	to interact with other content on the platform;	
24	(B) facilitates the offering, sale, purchase,	
25	payment, or shipping of goods or services, in-	

1	cluding software applications, between and
2	among consumers or businesses not controlled
3	by the platform; or
4	(C) enables user searches or queries that
5	access or display a large volume of information.
6	SEC. 6. IMPLEMENTATION.
7	(a) Covered Platform Designation.—The Fed-
8	eral Trade Commission or Department of Justice may des-
9	ignate a covered platform for the purpose of implementing
10	and enforcing this Act. Such designation shall—
11	(1) be based on a finding that the criteria set
12	forth in paragraph (6) of section 5 are met;
13	(2) be issued in writing and published in the
14	Federal Register; and
15	(3) will apply for 10 years from its issuance re-
16	gardless of whether there is a change in control or
17	ownership over the covered platform unless the Fed-
18	eral Trade Commission or the Department of Jus-
19	tice removes the designation pursuant to subsection
20	(b).
21	(b) Removal of Covered Platform Designa-
22	TION.—The Commission or the Department of Justice
23	shall—
24	(1) consider whether its designation of a cov-
25	ered platform pursuant to subsection (a) should be

- removed prior to the expiration of the 10-year period if the covered platform operator files a request with the Commission or the Department of Justice, which shows that the online platform is no longer a critical trading partner; and
 - (2) determine whether to grant a request submitted under paragraph (1) not later than 120 days after the date of the filing of such request.

(c) RULEMAKING AND TECHNICAL STANDARDS.—

(1) After designating an online platform as a covered platform, the Commission shall issue standards of interoperability specific to the covered platform. These standards shall implement the requirements of sections 3 and 4 of this Act. In adopting the standards implementing the requirements of sections 3 and 4, the Commission shall seek to encourage entry by reducing or eliminating the network effects that limit competition with the covered platform, ensure that competing businesses or a potential competing business interconnects with the covered platform on fair and nondiscriminatory terms, and protect data security and privacy.

(2) The Commission shall—

(A) establish a technical committee, as described in section 7 of this Act, to develop pro-

1	posed standards implementing the requirements
2	of section 3 as they apply to a specific covered
3	platform;
4	(B) issue such standards in accordance
5	with section 553 of title 5, United States Code
6	and
7	(C) reject standards that have the purpose
8	or effect of unreasonably denying access, under-
9	mine interoperability, or are unduly disruptive
10	to interoperability.
11	(d) Compliance Assessment.—The Commission
12	shall regularly assess compliance by covered platforms
13	with the provisions of this Act and may—
14	(1) undertake such investigation as appropriate
15	to render this assessment;
16	(2) issue subpoenas and civil investigative de-
17	mands for relevant information, including any infor-
18	mation that is necessary to effectuate the goals of
19	sections 3 and 4 this Act, and consult with other
20	agencies as appropriate; and
21	(3) prescribe such other rules in accordance
22	with section 553 of title 5, United States Code as
23	may be necessary and appropriate to carry out sec-
24	tions 2 and 1 of this 1 at

1	(e) Agency Complaints.—The Commission shall
2	establish procedures under which a user, covered platform
3	or a business user may file a complaint alleging a violation
4	of this Act.
5	(f) Reciprocity.—A business user shall not be
6	under any obligation to adopt or comply with the require-
7	ments of this Act or the rules adopted by the Commission
8	under this Act unless it chooses to—
9	(1) initiate the secure transfer of data from a
10	covered platform under section 3 of this Act; or
11	(2) access an interoperability interface of a cov-
12	ered platform under section 4 of this Act.
13	SEC. 7. TECHNICAL COMMITTEE.
14	(a) Establishment.—
15	(1) Not later than 180 days following the enact-
16	ment of this Act, the Commission shall establish a
17	technical committee to assist the Commission with
18	considerations relating to implementation and tech-
19	nical aspects of the requirements under sections 3
20	and 4 of this Act.
21	(2) The size of the committee and its member-
22	ship is within the sole discretion of the Commission
23	except as specified in subsection 7(b).
24	(b) Composition.—Each technical committee shall
25	include—

- 1 (1) representatives of businesses that, in the 2 judgement of the Commission, utilize or compete 3 with the platform;
- 4 (2) representatives of competition or privacy ad-5 vocacy organizations, and independent academics 6 that possess technical, legal, economic, financial, or 7 other knowledge that the Commission may deem 8 useful;
- 9 (3) a representative from the National Institute 10 of Standards and Technology; and
 - (4) representatives of a covered platform, which, if required by Commission, shall provide a nonvoting advisory member to provide consultation and other aid to the technical committee. A failure by the covered platform to participate in good faith in the development of standards by the Technical Committee shall be a violation of this statute.
- 18 (c) GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES.—Each technical 19 committee established under this section shall meet regu-20 larly to provide information, analysis, and recommenda-21 tions to the Commission on the standards of portability 22 and interoperability and any changes to those standards.
- 23 These standards should—
- 24 (1) seek to reduce or eliminate network effects 25 that limit competition with the covered platform;

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- 1 (2) establish data security and privacy protec-2 tions for data portability and interoperability;
 - (3) prevent fraudulent, malicious, or abusive activity by a competing business or a potential competing business; and
- 6 (4) establish reasonable thresholds related to 7 the frequency, nature, and volume of requests by a competing business or a potential competing busi-8 9 ness to access resources maintained by the covered 10 platform, beyond which the covered platform may 11 assess a reasonable fee for such access that shall be 12 reasonably proportional to the cost, complexity, and 13 risk to the covered platform of providing such ac-14 cess, and do not limit the ability or deter the incen-15 tive of a competing business or a potentially com-16 peting business to interoperate with the covered 17 platform.
- 18 (d) Role.—The role of technical committees is advi19 sory in nature, and such committees shall have no imple20 mentation or enforcement authority. However, the Com21 mission shall give strong consideration to the rec22 ommendations of such committees in implementing this
 23 Act.
- (e) Nonapplicability of the Federal Advisory
 Committee Act.—The Federal Advisory Committee Act

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- 1 (5 U.S.C. App.) shall not apply with respect to the tech-
- 2 nical committees.

3 SEC. 8. JUDICIAL REVIEW.

- 4 (a) In General.—Any party that is subject to a cov-
- 5 ered platform designation pursuant to section 6(a) of this
- 6 Act, a final order issued in any district court, or a final
- 7 order of the Commission issued in an administrative adju-
- 8 dicative proceeding may within 30 days of the issuance
- 9 of such order, petition for review of such order in the
- 10 United States Court of Appeals for the District of Colum-
- 11 bia Circuit.
- 12 (b) Treatment of Findings.—In a proceeding for
- 13 judicial review of a covered platform designation pursuant
- 14 to section 6(a) of this Act or a final order of the Commis-
- 15 sion, the findings of the Commission as to the facts, if
- 16 supported by evidence, shall be conclusive.

17 SEC. 9. ENFORCEMENT.

- 18 (a) Commission Litigation Authority.—If the
- 19 Commission has reason to believe that a covered platform
- 20 violated this Act, the Commission may commence a civil
- 21 action, in its own name by any of its attorneys designated
- 22 by it for such purpose, to recover a civil penalty under
- 23 this Act and seek other appropriate relief in a district
- 24 court of the United States against the covered platform
- 25 operator.

1 (b) Emergency Relief.— 2 (1) The Commission may seek a temporary in-3 junction requiring the covered platform operator to 4 take or stop taking any action for not more than 5 120 days and the court shall grant such relief if the 6 Commission proves— 7 (A) there is a plausible claim that a cov-8 ered platform operator took an action that 9 could violate this Act; and 10 (B) that action impairs the ability of at 11 least one company to compete with the covered 12 platform. 13 (2) The emergency relief shall not last more 14 than 120 days from the filing of the complaint. 15 (3) The court shall terminate the emergency re-16 lief at any time that the covered platform operator 17 proves that the Commission has not taken reason-18 able steps to investigate whether a violation has oc-19 curred. 20 (4) Nothing in this subsection prevents or limits 21 the Commission from seeking other equitable relief 22 as provided in section 10 of this Act. 23 (c) STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.—A proceeding for a violation of this Act may be commenced not later than

6 years after such violation occurs.

1 SEC. 10. REMEDIES.

2	(a) Civil Penalty.—The Commission may recover
3	a civil penalty for a violation of this Act, which shall ac-
4	crue to the United States, in an amount not more than
5	the greater of—
6	(1) 15 percent of the total United States rev-
7	enue of the person, partnership, or corporation for
8	the previous calendar year; or
9	(2) 30 percent of the United States revenue of
10	the person, partnership, or corporation in any line of
11	business affected or targeted by the unlawful con-
12	duct during the period of the unlawful conduct.
13	(b) Remedies in Addition.—Remedies provided in
14	this subsection are in addition to, and not in lieu of, any
15	other remedy available to the Commission under Federal
16	law.
17	(1) RESTITUTION; CONTRACT RESCISSION AND
18	REFORMATION; REFUNDS; RETURN OF PROPERTY.—
19	The Commission may seek, and a court may order,
20	with respect to the violation that gives rise to the

(2) DISGORGEMENT.—The Commission may seek, and a court may order, disgorgement of any unjust enrichment that a covered platform obtained as a result of the violation that gives rise to the suit.

suit, restitution for losses, rescission or reformation

of contracts, refund of money, or return of property.

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- 1 (3) Injunction.—The Commission may seek,
- and the court may order, relief in equity as nec-
- 3 essary to prevent, restrain, or prohibit violations of
- 4 this Act.
- 5 (c) Repeat Offenders.—If the fact finder deter-
- 6 mines that a covered platform has shown a pattern or
- 7 practice of violating this Act, the court shall consider re-
- 8 quiring that the Chief Executive Officer forfeit to the
- 9 United States Treasury any compensation received by that
- 10 person during the 12 months preceding or following the
- 11 filing of a complaint alleging a violation of this Act.
- 12 SEC. 11. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.
- Nothing in this Act shall be construed to limit any
- 14 authority of the Attorney General or the Federal Trade
- 15 Commission under the antitrust laws, section 5 of the
- 16 Federal Trade Commission Act (15 U.S.C. 45), or any
- 17 other provision of law or to limit the application of any
- 18 law.
- 19 SEC. 12. SEVERABILITY.
- 20 If any provision of this Act, an amendment made by
- 21 this Act, or the application of such provision or amend-
- 22 ment to any person or circumstance is held to be unconsti-
- 23 tutional, the remainder of this Act and of the amendments
- 24 made by this Act, and the application of the remaining

- 1 provisions of this Act and amendments to any person or
- 2 circumstance shall not be affected.

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