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Countering Online Harms White Paper

The Countering Online Harms Act is a bill that was passed in the house, and currently awaiting vote in the senate. This bipartisan bill was introduced by Brett Guthrie, a republican governor on the House Energy and Commerce Committee. It calls on the Federal Trade Commission to study and report on how artificial intelligence may be used to identify, remove and take action to address online harms including scams, intentionally misleading content, and other illegal online activity. The focus of this bill is to improve the internet ecosystem of the United States, and protect those who are less informed in current internet safety practices.

This Bill will protect against deceptive and fraudulent content intended to scam or otherwise, manipulated content intended to mislead individuals such as deep fake videos. Also, fake websites or mobile application interfaces designed for exploitation are targeted. The act calls for profiling of terrorists and violent extremists on digital platforms, and disinformation propaganda campaigns. Citizens of almost all demographics in the US are subject to online harms. In 2019, 5% of the elderly people in the US were scammed online, amounting up to 3 billion dollars, and even then a large portion of cases still go unreported. In another study, 95% of teens in America use the internet and 85% are on social media, which gives extremists easy means of contact to the younger generation. Finally for a more local statistic, it was reported in 2019 that New Hampshire had the highest reported cyberbullying rate of a little over 20% of students, grades 9 through 12.

For recommendations on how the Federal trade commission could solve the issues discussed in the bill, the United States should target big tech companies, for they have the largest jurisdiction over current social media platforms. America should have more inquiry efforts for the Cyber Homeland threats, due to there not being much the U.S. can do to enforce internet policies in foreign lands. No matter how the bill is implemented first amendment rights of US citizens should be held at the highest regard, and for the Federal trade commission to have adequate artificial intelligence infrastructure, more funding and research will be needed. In addition, big tech companies have the most knowledge into Artificial intelligence creation, so it'd be beneficial for the US to work in tandem with them to produce AI-oriented solutions. Prior lackluster efforts to protect U.S. Citizens online have led to massive monetary loss and distress in many communities; Implementation of the Countering Online Harms act would solve many of the issues discussed, and would be a utilitarian shift for the better.