A Quick Crypto Intro:

- What is a cryptocurrency?
  - Cryptocurrency is a form of decentralized money – it's a protocol for digital value transfer
  - A protocol for free and open exchange of value, just like the internet is a protocol for free and open exchange of information
  - Just like all you need to browse Wikipedia is a web browser and internet connection, all you need to use Bitcoin, Ethereum, etc. is a wallet application and network connection
- Why did cryptocurrency emerge?
  - Concerns about the centralized aspects of money – accessibility, community management, etc.
    - Although many of us have access to the privileges of banking, not all do. Bitcoin allows for open participation in the digital financial system
    - Eliminate the issue of borders with money – again, access and also fees. Can send and receive money from anyone, anywhere in the world, period
    - Built by a community of developers, users, miners/stakers, etc. - democratizing money. "Social consensus layer" – community needs to reach some level about the rules, implementation, etc.
- Pros and cons – Pros
  - Accessibility – can be used by anyone, anywhere by installing an application. Very useful for peer-to-peer payments, just like peer-to-peer file sharing.
  - Push-mechanism
    - No chargebacks for merchants. I get paid for consulting often in cryptocurrencies – once they send to my address it's mine.
    - Don't need to collect personal information, worry about data leaks
    - Just need to share a **public** address to get paid
    - Don't have to share private information (credit card) with every merchant I do business with
  - Strong civil liberties tool
    - Current example – Ukrainian government accepting payment in cryptocurrencies
    - Donation to journalists/dissidents – Wikileaks, etc.
    - Allows users to evade potential account freezes, seizures, etc.
    - Decentralized trading of tokens, assets – Ethereum, NFTs – ex future exchange of car keys may happen via blockchain instead of the DMV
  - Gives users a choice – there's many cryptocurrencies with different development goals
    - Ethereum – smart contracts, strong social layer for rapid protocol development
    - Bitcoin – "digital gold", conservative protocol development in some aspects
    - Litecoin/Bitcoin Cash – "digital cash" low fees and fast processing for payments
    - Much infighting and differences in crypto, but we can all try our own things with our own variations in protocols – instead of one gov't money having all the say
- Pros and cons – Cons
  - With great power comes great responsibility – it's very easy to make irreversible mistakes with cryptocurrencies.
    - Permanent loss can result
    - Volatile markets akin to gambling
    - Scams/fraud are rampant and require a lot of education/prevention

- Environmental/energy use concerns with specifically Proof-of-Work consensus
  - High energy use helps with security, but is it worth it relative to adoption?
  - Alternative consensus such as Proof-of-Stake emerging, may reduce or eliminate this concern over time
- Overall:
  - I think cryptocurrency is a powerful tool for free and open exchange, just like the internet is so useful for information
  - We need strong tools to be empowered citizens – "digital sovereignty" is important
  - Use cases are many, find uses that apply to your life – it's all about using the right tool for the right job
- Q&A