

Testimony for U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee

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Good morning Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Feinstein, and Members of the Committee. Before I begin, I ask that my full statement be made part of the record, and I will briefly summarize my comments here.

I am Jared Sine, Chief Legal Officer at Match Group, a Dallas-based online company that owns a portfolio of companies that operate a variety of popular online dating sites in the U.S. and abroad. Some of the brands that Members of the Committee (or in many cases their single staff) may be familiar with are Tinder, Match.com, OkCupid, and Hinge.

I appreciate the bipartisan invitation to be here today to discuss our support of the Eliminating Abusive and Rampant Neglect of Interactive Technologies Act of 2020 (EARN IT Act).

Match thanks Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Feinstein, Senator Blumenthal, and the other supporters of this legislation for the courage and foresight to develop the constructs of this bill. We are supporting similar legislation in the UK, and we think this is a construct that effectively promotes collaboration between industry, law enforcement, leading experts and others. It is not only workable; it has the ability to both foster innovation and act aggressively and effectively against child online exploitation, while protecting the privacy rights of individuals.

The EARN IT Act is a serious attempt to tackle big, complex societal issues created by the internet. The central question it looks to answer is the right one: how will the entire internet ecosystem—from content distributors to gatekeepers, to social media platforms and online dating services—keep users safe and act aggressively against illicit content, predatory behavior, and bad actors who seek to exploit children?

The Reality of Children Online and Why We Must Act

Before I get into detail about why we support modernizing our laws to better address threats to our kids' safety, I want to establish some basic realities:

1. **Technology is at the heart of how we interact at virtually every juncture.** Communicating has never been easier and more convenient, but this convenience and omnipresence has given rise to new threats to our kids' safety.
2. **The growth and social acceptance of online dating reflects the broader trajectory of technology,** and the problems we are discussing today are internet problems stemming from broader societal challenges, as the Committee correctly recognizes.
3. **Our kids are not prepared to operate in the online world where society is allowing them to operate.** Adults are trying to protect children but are short on options and struggling to control the use of devices.

The Consequences of Doing Nothing

I hope that other executives will pause to realize the impacts of these realities on our children and resist the urge to retreat to their corner and use fear and recycled arguments to oppose this bill.

Because the consequences of doing nothing are both unacceptable and terrifying. The advent of smartphones and apps have coincided with skyrocketing rates of depression and suicide among this country's young people. Aside from the obvious safety issues and human tragedies we read about in the news, we must recognize the impact that the internet and a digital native generation is having on all our nation's families, regardless of their shape or size.

Children should not be in this situation, and their wellbeing—and in some cases their lives—hang in the balance. They are not equipped to sniff out the groomers from the gamers or the traffickers from the tweeters. And while we laud the efforts of technology companies across the globe who are working to try to address these problems, more must be done.

The EARN IT Act will not singlehandedly solve all of these issues, but it serves as a call to action for all technology companies. Because, there is one unavoidable reality at the core of the internet today: all platforms can, and must, do more to protect our kids. The EARN IT Act is a great start to that dialogue.

Our Business

Match Group recognized the dangers of online communities where minors and adults are allowed to commingle. That is why we voluntarily made the choice to restrict the use of our platforms to only users 18 and older and why we deploy extensive resources to block underage users and identify and remove bad actors from our platform.

To do this, we leverage sophisticated technologies like artificial intelligence-assisted reviews to keep minors off our services, and we use advanced machine learning tools that scan profiles for red flags, empowering our safety team to take swift action to shut down problematic accounts. We continue to refine and add other technologies like selfie verification, user blocking, and easy reporting of users across all our products to enhance the safety and security of our users.

We will continue to seek out new technologies and more effective tools to keep our communities safe. This is why we established and proactively seek advice and recommendations from the Match Group Advisory Council (MGAC). MGAC is a group of experts from leading organizations like the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, Polaris, THORN and the Center on Violence Against Women & Children at Rutgers University. These leading experts review our existing practices and advise us on the new and developing practices that help to keep users safe, crack down on bad actors, and connect victims to resources. Our users have already benefitted from our engagement with the best and brightest minds in this space.

Our business does not rely on the monetization of user data or viral posts. Instead, our business depends on users having a safe and enjoyable experience. As a result, filtering content, removing posts, and even removing the ability to share private images across platforms like Tinder, Hinge, and Match.com is a key part of our business strategy. Not only is safety and security the right thing to do, but we also want our users to have the confidence that we are taking the right steps to give them the tools they need to keep themselves safe—like our new partnership with Noonlight, a first-of-its-kind panic button for our users to call emergency responders to the scene in real time.

Yes, parents have a responsibility for their own children, but they cannot do it alone, especially in this new modern online world. And while technology companies are making strides and exerting great effort in these areas, we must do more to keep kids safe. That is why we support this legislation holding online companies—including our Match Group brands—to the highest standards when it comes to preventing online child sexual exploitation.

The Intersection of the EARN IT Act, Privacy and Security and Section 230

Match Group takes the privacy of our users seriously, which is why we have developed a privacy framework that meets the standards of the GDPR—and all our brands are required to meet or exceed these standards. Like all internet companies, we grapple with the same inherent tensions that exist between privacy and security.

We believe that these issues are not mutually exclusive, especially when it comes to our support of the EARN IT Act. There are technological solutions to balance safety for our children and privacy, and we need to work to enable the Commission and develop those solutions. That is the point of the Commission—its ability to collaborate to solve these issues, taking into account the ecosystem, its needs, and the rights of its users and providers to drive a solution that works for everyone.

We also believe that Section 230 has been a critical part of the internet's rise and success and must be kept strong and vibrant. However, we do not believe that companies who do nothing to stop child exploitation should receive the benefit and trust that Section 230 has long granted them.

This legislation acknowledges the importance of Section 230 to privacy, free speech, and so many other rights that we hold dear, while rightfully recognizing that online platforms must do more. The bill also creates a collaborative framework for setting standards across the internet ecosystem that will help tech companies fulfill their moral and societal obligation to protecting our kids online.

We do not take our support for this proposal lightly. We recognize how important it is to strike the right balance between privacy and security. But we believe the proposed legislation has the ability to do just that: by balancing those needs of safety and privacy through collaboration. As part of the standard setting process, the Commission established by the EARN IT Act **must** be empowered and instructed to take these tensions into account.

Match Group strongly supports the Commission included in this proposal for the very reason that it provides a forum for bringing law enforcement, industry, and technical experts together to create commonsense rules of the road that will not just level the playing field for technology companies but also incentivize investing in—and enforcing—online safety.

Not only do we support this legislation, but we'd also like to offer suggestions to make it even stronger. We share your goal of making sure this is done in a way that does not stifle innovation but still has teeth, a topic I know Sen. Graham and others have talked about already.

We Can All Do More

It is time we all have some "skin in the game" to protect users and our children. Platforms, gatekeepers, app stores, social media, browsers, and the rest of the internet ecosystem must do more to help protect our children.

And we at Match want to do more as well, which is why I detailed at length the newer and better technology we continue to roll out in an effort to address the threats of today. We are ready to look around the corner at the safety challenges of tomorrow—in a way that protects users' privacy while cracking down on bad actors.

I thank you for your time today and look forward to working with Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Feinstein, and all the members of the Committee to build support for this legislation, which would make a real difference in bringing everyone to the table, taking action against predators who threaten our kids' safety.