

Opening Statement
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.
Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce
Hearing on “Reauthorizing Brand USA and the U.S. SAFE WEB Act”
October 29, 2019

We are here today to discuss the reauthorization of two important programs that protect and support American consumers and businesses. The first promotes foreign travel to the United States, which bolsters our economy and creates American jobs. The second enhances the Federal Trade Commission’s cross-border cooperation and enforcement so it can protect U.S. consumers and businesses from foreign actors engaged in fraud and deception.

Our nation has a broad variety of unique treasures that attract tourists from all around the world. Whether you’re looking for arts or adventure, nature or theme parks, music or sports, there is something for everyone in our country.

Tourism is a critical industry in my district and throughout New Jersey. From hiking in Sandy Hook to pilgrimages to the Stone Pony in Asbury Park, foreign and domestic travelers are helping hotels, restaurants, and other small businesses grow and succeed. But we can always welcome more visitors from abroad.

Brand USA—established by the Travel Promotion Act of 2009—makes sure that foreign tourists are aware of the endless possibilities available them when they travel to the United States.

I applaud Representatives Welch and Bilirakis for their work over the years to ensure the success and long-term viability of this important program. They have now introduced legislation that would ensure Brand USA is funded through 2027.

It’s important that we continue to support Brand USA’s mission. International travel to the United States supports 1.2 million American jobs. It also adds billions of dollars to our economy. A new study shows Brand USA’s global marketing initiatives deliver an excellent bang for the buck. For every dollar spent on marketing by Brand USA, 28 dollars are added to the U.S. economy. As we continue to work to strengthen our economy, we should certainly look at extending Brand USA beyond next year.

I also look forward to discussing legislation introduced by Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers and Representative Kelly to extend the U.S. SAFE WEB Act of 2006. Last reauthorized in 2012, the SAFE WEB Act enhances the FTC’s ability to protect U.S. consumers and businesses from cross-border fraud and deception.

With the internet, advances in telecommunications, and our increasingly connected homes and businesses, Americans are more susceptible than ever to foreign actors engaged in fraud and deception, illegal scams, and spyware.

The SAFE WEB Act affirms the FTC's ability to go after foreign actors engaged in wrongdoing. The law also bolsters the FTC's ability to exchange information and to provide investigative assistance to foreign law enforcement agencies. This kind of cross-border cooperation is crucial to the FTC's ability to bring strong enforcement actions.

The FTC has relied on provisions of the SAFE WEB Act for a wide range of cases—from its takedown of a sweepstakes telemarketing scam targeting older adults to its action against a manufacturer of connected toys that violated the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.

However, without Congressional action this law will expire next year. We should extend both these programs to protect American businesses and consumers.