

June 4, 2025

The Honorable Andrew N. Ferguson
Chairman
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest
Washington, District of Columbia 20580

RE: The Attention Economy: How Big Tech Firms Exploit Children and Hurt Families

Dear Chairman Ferguson:

ACT | The App Association writes to express our disappointment in the narrow focus and composition of the panels in today's workshop, *The Attention Economy: How Big Tech Firms Exploit Children and Hurt Families*.¹ Protecting children's online privacy and safety is a laudable goal that deserves varied perspectives to inform and strengthen effective policy. Without comprehensive stakeholder engagement, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) risks advancing policies that would fail to achieve the intended goal—protecting kids—while creating harmful second-order effects. With its dual jurisdiction over competition and consumer protection matters, the FTC has long been uniquely positioned among the nation's agencies to bring together expert dialogues on complex policy issues. Today's workshop fails this legacy by excluding businesses, developers, and others who create, deploy, and manage these technologies in the real world.

The App Association is a global trade association for small and medium-sized technology companies. Our members are entrepreneurs, innovators, and independent developers within the global app ecosystem that engage with verticals across every industry. We work with and for our members to promote a policy environment that rewards and inspires innovation, protects consumers, and fosters a healthy digital ecosystem.

Small tech innovators like our members can offer essential, real-world expertise on policy implementation, technical feasibility, and the operational requirements of maintaining user privacy and safety. By excluding them from today's workshop, the Commission risks overlooking their firsthand experiences and creating unintended burdens that disproportionately harm small businesses. A balanced, inclusive dialogue would better equip the Commission to craft more effective policies to protect children online and avoid implementation challenges seen in recent policy proposals.

Without this input, well-intentioned policies can result in a range of harms, such as privacy risks, technical challenges, and undue burdens on smaller businesses. For example, proposals mandating age verification may appear protective. However, in practice, they jeopardize children's privacy and security, limit internet access for consumers without appropriate identification, normalize invasive

¹ "The Attention Economy: How Big Tech Firms Exploit Children and Hurt Families." Federal Trade Commission, 4 June 2025, <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/events/2025/06/attention-economy-tech-firms-exploit-children>.

data collection, and chill free expression. Age verification also often fails to meet its intended goal, as children can simply access restricted content through secondary sources or shared devices. Businesses that deal with parent and child customers every day could tell the Commission a great deal about their experiences with these pitfalls. Additionally, recent proposals, such as the App Store Accountability Act, would impose significant compliance burdens on small businesses, who must divert limited resources to build the infrastructure necessary for compliance. These examples underscore why inclusive stakeholder engagement is essential to producing effective, practical regulations.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We share your commitment to protecting children online and look forward to constructive dialogue on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Morgan Reed'.

Morgan Reed
President

ACT | The App Association