

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (VA-03)**

Full Committee Hearing

*"Building an AI-Ready America"*

Wednesday, January 14, 2026 | 10:15 a.m.

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being with us today.

From chatbots to programming to grocery lists, artificial intelligence has rapidly integrated into the daily lives of millions of Americans, transforming how we interact with technology and the world around us.

Due to the rapid rise of AI technology, scientists and researchers have had relatively little time to study its impact on American lives. So, we must act carefully and methodically when implementing new technologies, particularly in settings where they may have long-lasting impacts, such as our schools, workplaces, and healthcare settings. This is a time of incredible change and possibility, but it is up to us to shepherd in this technology with the caution and responsibility that the situation demands.

As we discussed at an Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee hearing on this issue early last year, AI is already present in our schools. Many educators have found that generative AI systems allow them to offer more personalized instruction to students, streamline assignments, and provide real-time feedback. This has led to the rise of AI literacy, in which students and teachers have learned to use AI responsibly for the benefit of their education and futures. But it is not without risk. There was a piece this morning on NPR titled, "Report: The Risks of AI in Schools Outweigh the Benefits."

So while the prospect of this new technology is exciting, we don't have enough data right now to understand the full impact on Americans' lives.

AI tools are created by humans, and humans are flawed. This can lead to AI tools exhibiting biases and unfairness due to biased training data, other kinds of discrimination, and a lack of diversity in AI development. This can result in unfair decision-making about what students need to learn and how.

Discrimination by way of AI has also had ramifications in our workforce. A Society for Human Resource Management survey found that nearly 80 percent of its members use AI for recruiting and hiring. Multiple studies have found that some of these recruitment tools have demonstrated biases against women and Black applicants. It is important to recognize that AI is not an infallible technology, and it is not neutral. So, we must take proactive steps to ensure that AI technology does not perpetuate existing disparities and erode civil rights.

Concerns about AI in the workplace don't stop at the hiring process. As AI proliferates, we've begun to see employers use sophisticated automated technology to monitor and evaluate workers. This includes tracking workers' physical activities on the job, such as how often they go to the bathroom, using facial recognition to assess their attention to their computer screens, and other [tasks]. Still worse, employers have used data to estimate potential union organizing activity. I don't think anyone on this Committee would want their personal activities tracked by an employer, so we shouldn't expect less from the American worker.

Unfortunately, the Trump Administration's actions to dismantle the Department of Education have hamstrung much of our existing capacity to study and regulate AI's effect on education. The decimation of the Office of Educational Technology and the Institute of Education Sciences has diminished our ability to comprehensively research student safety related to artificial intelligence. And one of our strongest institutions to fight discrimination, the Office for Civil Rights, had almost half of its staff fired, and seven of its twelve regional offices closed. While the Trump Administration has started rehiring some of the staff, the chaos has clearly disrupted the office's operations – to the detriment of parents and students.

Today, 33 states have released official guidance or policies on the use of AI in K-12 schools. Virginia, for example, has issued guidance on integrating AI in education and, among other things, provides recommendations for teacher professional development and AI literacy programs. But without clear, consistent federal leadership from the Department of Education, states have largely been left to navigate this complex landscape on their own, creating inconsistencies and exacerbating achievement gaps.

AI also poses significant risks to data privacy and child safety. For example, the nonprofit group AI Forensics found in a recent analysis of 20,000 images created by Grok that two percent depicted a person who appeared to be 18 or younger in bikinis or transparent clothing. A study by Brown University researchers found AI chatbots routinely violate mental health ethics standards, including failing to refer users to appropriate resources and responding indifferently to crisis situations, including suicidal ideation. OpenAI recently launched a controversial ChatGPT Health app which can review users' health records and generate personalized advice, raising concerns about privacy and the accuracy of chatbots. And Meta is currently fighting allegations in court that it downplayed the risks of its platforms to children.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children also reports that it is seeing a dramatic increase in generative AI technologies that are capable of creating child sexual abuse material, and a rise in other disturbing trends related to AI chatbots. The organization received roughly 7,000 reports through its "CyberTipline" in 2024 and nearly half a million in just the first half of 2025.

Despite these very real risks, it has become alarmingly clear that the Trump Administration is eager to grant large technology companies unprecedented access to Americans' data. In December, the Trump Administration issued an executive order attempting to block states from regulating AI on their own. [Congressional Republicans] seriously considered doing that by legislation, which [would] override state laws. Congress should not, however, stand idly by while the Trump Administration may be ingratiating itself with big tech CEOs and preventing states from protecting Americans against the dangers posed by AI.

This is why Congress must take an active role in shaping how AI is integrated into our lives and develop thoughtful regulations that balance protecting students, workers, and families, and fostering economic growth. Today, we stand at another crossroads of technological advancement, and it is up to Congress to ensure that AI takes us forward, not backward.

I look forward to the conversation today, and I yield back the balance of my time.