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Dear Senator Ron Wyden,

The Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act of 2017 and the Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act of 2017, while well intentioned, would do little to impact global human trafficking and risks imposing serious criminal and civil liabilities on a large swath of electronic service providers. We strongly encourage the United States Congress to enable and support data-led efforts to create meaningful and effective anti-trafficking legislation that rescues and restores survivors of human trafficking and justly punishes traffickers.

Anti-trafficking disruption opportunities such as public awareness campaigns and website takedowns likewise need to be informed by data. The benefits of utilizing any of these options need to be carefully weighed against intelligence gains and losses. Of particular concern to our work are website takedowns. When this occurs, we potentially lose visibility into criminal activity and forces us to retool our data ingestion pipelines and harvesting techniques. We instead advocate for careful tracking of criminal activity using predictive modeling, data analytics, and other cutting-edge technologies that enable us to turn the table on traffickers.

Furthermore, the bills currently being debated in both Houses potentially erode the provisions of the Communications Decency Act meant to limit liability for electronic service providers. They place an unnecessary burden on providers such as Facebook and Twitter who are active and responsive participants in law enforcement investigations into trafficking. Instead, we need to foster a collaborative data- and technology-sharing culture in the anti-trafficking stakeholder community that empowers them to harness big data analytics and tools to continue to do good work and save lives.

Global Emancipation Network is a data analytics and intelligence nonprofit dedicated to countering human trafficking around the world. Minerva, the multi-tenant data analytics platform created and hosted by Global Emancipation Network, empowers users across the anti-trafficking stakeholder community to find trafficking victims, stop traffickers, and inform resources and policy.

Sincerely,

Sherrie Caltagirone