

***Healthy Media for Youth Summit***  
**Remarks of Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker**  
**Capitol Visitors Center**  
**October 6, 2010**

Good morning everyone. I would like to give a special thanks to the Girl Scouts who invited me to speak on this important issue: ***healthy media for youth*** and for bringing together so many interesting perspectives and resources for today's event.

I was a girl scout once upon a time and can tell you firsthand what a positive influence Girl Scouts had on me in building courage, confidence and character. Congratulations to the Girl Scouts for going strong for more than 90 years and for your outstanding membership of 3.3 million Girl Scouts across the country.

When I was a girl, Barbie was really popular, and we all wanted to look like her, marry Ken, and live in the Barbie dream house. If Barbie were real, she'd be a 5 foot 9 inch blonde with measurements of 36/18/33. No matter how hard I tried, that was not going to work for me because I'm a short brunette.

Fast forward to today, according to a recent study by the Girl Scout Research Institute, 60 percent of teenage girls compare their bodies to fashion models and almost 90 percent of girls say the fashion industry places a lot of pressure on teenage girls to be thin.

According to the American Psychological Association, three of the most common mental health problems among girls -- eating disorders, depression, and low self-esteem -- are linked to the objectification of girls and women in media.

Personally, I witness my four stepdaughters face these challenges daily, as they are confronted with significant pressure from countless media outlets.

According to a Kaiser Family Foundation 2010 study, children and teens devote over 10 hours a day to consuming media content. We, as both policymakers and parents, rightfully focus on the real risks and challenges faced by that level of consumption. But we should also be quick to recognize that today's media and technology offer so much potential for positive messages and values as well.

How can we ensure that our children are empowered to make sense of the images they are seeing and how can we provide healthy and positive images about women and girls on all media platforms?

The starting point is Media Literacy. I applaud NCTA and NAB along with The Creative Coalition for supporting the Girl Scouts in this initiative. Much of these efforts will occur through private/public partnerships.

I commend NAB's work with their education foundation, empowering women and people of color to lead our country and I applaud their scholarship programs for aspiring communications students that empower female professionals.

I also commend NCTA's ongoing work with Cable in the Classroom, a national effort to expand media literacy education to help adults and children understand and evaluate the messages disseminated by technology media. We need to all work together to demystify technology—whether it's the smartphone or computers—and help parents parent. This important work at teaching the building blocks of how to control today's technology is central to our ability to help the next generation.

There is no single solution or magical fix to protect young women from harmful images, but I invite all of you to work collaboratively to navigate the roads ahead. Help us keep the focus on protecting children and providing positive messages.

Thanks so much for having me speak to you today.