

**REMARKS OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS
CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS FOUNDATION
ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE
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Thank you so much to Congresswoman Yvette Clarke for inviting me to join you at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF) Annual Legislative Conference today. ALC is always one of the most exciting times of the year in DC for the black community, next to Howard Homecoming, of course.

One of the aspects of ALC that I really enjoy is that it provides us a time to reflect on how far we've come with former and current colleagues in our respective policy areas. ALC also provides a path to usher in a new generation of policymakers and advocates. Most of all, this conference is a time to highlight our policy priorities and develop collaborative solutions so that when we return to our communities, whether Brooklyn, Southeast DC, or Jackson, Mississippi, we're better equipped to "bend the arc of the moral universe" toward a greater measure of justice through our work.

When I walk through the doors of the FCC every day, I think about how our work in the fields of telecommunications and technology intersects with other policy areas that impact Americans' lives—and African American lives in particular--whether through our systems of criminal justice, education, healthcare, or transportation. Technology already touches every single aspect of our lives and will do so in even greater measure in the future. Yet, even though this expansion of technology's influence in our lives may pull us toward extremes of either optimism or pessimism, I prescribe realism as the best course. I find that stance most useful because we must recognize that both marvelous benefits and harsh consequences can accompany advances in technology—especially when we are talking about the impact tech has on the interests of black communities. We must focus a judicious eye on both possibilities and seek a balance that promotes the best possible results for the future.

A recent study concluded that low-income communities in the digital age exist as both hyper-visible and invisible; over-included and excluded. For example, these communities are disproportionately targeted by biased artificial intelligence systems yet at the same time they are not captured by hiring algorithms that scour the internet to make determinations about job candidates. Whether too visible or too invisible, the end result can be an equally crushing diminishment of social freedom or opportunity. These inequities, without doubt applies to the low-income, but also reverberates throughout our marginalized communities, including communities of color.

That's why I was thrilled to see Congresswoman Clarke address the concerns of this hypervisibility with the "No Biometric Barriers to Housing Act." This legislation would prevent HUD-funded properties from using biometric systems in their units and recognize that residents of these properties are disproportionately from communities of color, low-income communities, and immigrant communities. These communities have historically been and presently are being over-surveilled. We understand that the data gathered from these biometric systems, and even our cellphone carriers, can be collected, stored, sold, and used in nefarious ways that will, at best,

deliver no benefit to our citizens and, at worst, will be the source of significant harm. It is the responsibility of our government to protect users' data in a manner that unlocks the greatest measure of potential social benefits for our future and ensures that it is never put to discriminatory uses that perpetuate the inequities of the past. I embrace this responsibility with a personal sense of duty and mission.

But before I walk too far down the road about the harms that our communities face as it relates to emerging technologies, let's give praise where it is due. Technology has clearly changed our lives for the better -- ushering in new ways to obtain education from a distance, new procedures for diagnosing and treating medical conditions, and new paths for storytellers to break into an industry that traditionally had very high barriers to entry. But I gotta tell you, I was traveling much of last week, and missed my 4-year old baby girl most. And, because of improvements in communications technology, I was able to see and hear from her in a way that helped me feel and connect with her day in a way that is special. Her smile made me reflect on how lucky I was to be living at the current time.

Specifically, as it relates to smart cities, technology is going to drive advancements in the structure of our city living with improved transportation, more efficient use of public utilities, and greater traffic management. But I also see how it is going to change lives. And let me tell you what I mean. We are also talking about a world with smart manufacturing, automation, and driverless cars. Now I don't have to tell you how many people drive cars for a living -- whether it is a taxi cab or an Uber or a Lyft. The benefits of a 5G world need to do just that -- benefit *all* of us in the real world. For starters, those building out the next generation network need to look like America. The entire range of Americans' interests must be present in the process. But there is an even bigger picture here. We need to be ready for the changing future of work -- that includes making sure that we re-train and up-skill our most senior workers who will be displaced; making sure all of our children have the best STEM education so that they can drive innovation, and every population in between. Over the coming days, I hope to join with all of you in this space to bring together educators, community leaders, policy-makers and technology companies. We need smart cities to also be 21st Century Innovation Hubs that build the economic transition model for a future of prosperity for all Americans. The technology doesn't lead us, we lead the technology. So let's get started.

Finally, I always say that it is hard to build an airplane while flying, and that is exactly what we are doing with much of the policies in this space. But I do believe that the onus is on every single person in this room to make sure that both corrective and proactive measures are taken to protect and strengthen the black community and other marginalized groups in the digital age. The economic, political, and social fabric of our country depends on policies that center our voices both now and, in the future, so thank you again to Congresswoman Clarke for organizing this event which does just that.

I hope that you all thoroughly enjoy your time at the conference, and I look forward to seeing you next year when we can celebrate the progress that was made while strategizing on our continued fight for justice. Thank you.