STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER DEBORAH TAYLOR TATE
Connected Nation/iKeepSafe Partnership
Belmont University, Nashville, TN
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Good Morning. The partnership announced today between Connected Nation and iKeepSafe is the perfect illustration of a voluntary, industry-based initiative, between the public and private sectors, which will truly change the lives of Tennessee's children. I want to particularly thank Brian Mefford, Dr. Fisher, and Governor Breseden for forging this partnership, and participating in this outstanding event. Governor Breseden and the state broadband task force provided the leadership and vision for Connected Tennessee. Personally I am thrilled to be able to talk about Connected Tennessee, rather than Connected Kentucky, when giving speeches on the importance of deploying broadband across America. I also want to thank Connected Tennessee's corporate partners AT&T, Dell, and the Department of Children's Services. Finally, I want to thank the many children, parents, and Tennessee officials and representatives who are here today. Our children are our country's most valuable natural resource, and we should treat them as such. In order to ensure they reach their greatest potential, we must ensure that they have access to a wealth of educational information, in an environment that protects their physical safety, healthy mental development, and emotional well-being.

With the rise of information technology, Internet access has become the gateway for today's educational resources. Empowering students with computers is absolutely

essential for our children to reap the benefits of a full and robust education; in order to prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow. Computers 4 Kids creates the opportunity for all Tennessee children to access the educational and research materials they need to compete and ultimately succeed in the global economy and to ensure our country remains strong in our global competitiveness as well.

I, like many parents across the country, never really thought past the beneficial opportunities the Internet offers -- from the wonders of telemedicine, to distance learning opportunities, to creating and producing your own content. The Internet and broadband have brought the world to our children. With the click of a mouse, they have access to information about almost anything, and in almost any format. However, what I want to discuss today is the importance of making children aware of the very real dangers the internet poses—so that we can keep them safe online, just as we strive to keep them safe in our schools, neighborhoods, and homes.

Time Spent Online

How much time do children spend online? Recent reports show American children spend more than twelve hours per week online. A 2007 Pew study shows that 28% of online teens have created their own blog. Twenty-seven percent maintain their own webpage. Thirty-nine percent share their own artwork, photos, stories or videos online- often these are personal and confidential, yet they may in the future be highly destructive to teens' collegiate years, or worse, their professional careers. Forty-one

percent of teens who use MySpace, Facebook, or other social networking sites send messages to their friends everyday through these sites — while only 22% of teens send messages via email everyday. What was once described as a "virtual world" is now our children's real world – 24/7. And, even though they may believe it is a "personal" website, it is indeed very public.

With the explosion of new educational materials available online, one might think parents would be 100% pleased with the internet's role in their children's lives. But surveys show just the opposite: a late 2006 survey that showed 59% of parents think the Internet has been a good thing for their children--- down from 67% who thought it was good in 2004. Parents, and I am one of them, are beginning to understand the risks associated with Internet use.

Child Pornography

Another concern the Internet has brought to light is the presence of, and market for, child pornography. Child pornography, most of which is distributed via the Internet, is a multi-billion dollar per year industry. Seventy-nine percent of unwanted exposure to pornography occurs in the home. There are more than 4 million pornographic websites or 12% of all websites. The proliferation of child pornography is real and without appropriate government, industry, and parental oversight it will likely continue to grow.   As our world changes and new threats emerge, we must respond appropriately. "Don't talk to strangers" is as applicable today as it was 30 years ago –

only more frightening because the 45-year-old criminal can pretend to be a cute 15-year-old boy. And "pretexting" is just a nice word for dangerous "predatory" behavior.

Cyberbullying

In addition to these concerns is the problem of cyber-bullying, most recently brought to light in the wake of the tragic death of a young teenage girl who took her own life after being taunted online. I-safe reports that 42% of children have been bullied online, and 1 in 4 has had it happen more than once. Just last week, the Department of Justice held a press conference as part of Internet Safety Month, and outlined the steps parents and children can take to reduce the risk of cyberbullying.

 I am desperately interested in this problem, both as a mother of three, including a college-aged daughter, and a policymaker who sees this not merely as a technology issue but as a very real health threat to the safety and well-being of our children. In June, Verizon Chairman and CEO Ivan Seidenberg told attendees at the International Stop Cyberbullying Conference at Pace University that online threats to privacy and security, as well as to the mental and physical well-being of Internet users, should be of *paramount concern* to those in the online industries, law enforcement, educators, parents, and young people, and that together, through dialogue and action, we can make the Internet the empowering and safe environment everyone envisions.

Piracy

As a life-long resident of Nashville -- Music City USA-- I am constantly challenging Internet Service Providers to partner with the music industry to protect against piracy. Overall, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce reports that piracy and counterfeiting cost our economy $250 billion. Pirated <u>music</u> alone costs the U.S. economy $12.5 billion in economic output each year—and 71,000 jobs. Reports show that between 50-95% of all music on the internet is pirated, much of it from right here in Nashville, TN. We must educate our children about the real-world harms that come from downloading and sharing illegal music and movies. In order to advance this goal, I voted last week to allow Comcast, one of the nation's largest internet service providers, to monitor its networks for illegal uses, such as illegal downloads and piracy. While I continue to advocate an Internet free from government regulation, I believe some limited oversight by the providers is the best way to prevent illegal activities online, which can pose dangerous threats to our children.

<u>International</u>

Internet safety isn't just a concern for America's families—it's a growing global concern as well. In just the last few months, I've been asked to speak at APEC-Tel, the Asian Pacific Telecom Ministers in Bangkok, at the Global Forum in Italy, and with Secretary General Hammadoun Tourre of the ITU who, I am thrilled to report, has begun to raise the issue in Geneva with the council of member nations of the ITU. I have also been in discussions with the Ministers of Japan, Australia, and Viet Nam and

am pleased to report that they have various initiatives ongoing. Japan is now issuing notices urging parents and schools to limit internet-accessible cell phones to children. They have recommended that Japanese cell phone manufacturers develop phones with GPS and talk capabilities only. DOCOMO, the largest Japanese wireless provider, has undertaken an internet-safety curriculum and actually sends instructors into schools to provide instruction. I am challenging U.S. telecom providers to follow the lead of DOCOMO, and become engaged in teaching media literacy to American students as well.

Conclusion

As we celebrate today, it's important to remember all the painstaking work that went into making this great day happen. All of the many partners – public and private – that have come together through Connected Tennessee and its parent organization Connected Nation to ensure that all Tennessee children and families are empowered by technology. And it's no small matter to bring these groups together to achieve something so meaningful. These are groups that – at first glance – have remarkably divergent interests. Healthcare, education, economic development, computer manufacturing, broadband services, Internet safety, and many others are represented here. These groups often compete, and may sometimes even disagree, on a wide range of critical economic issues. But through the innovative partnership of Connected Tennessee, these diverse organizations have come together with the common goal of

providing technology to make a real difference in the lives of Tennessee's – and indeed our nation's -- children.

Certainly the Internet enables children to broaden their educational, social, and geographic horizons beyond our wildest dreams. Let's just make sure they have the tools and the knowledge to protect themselves in their new digital, wireless, instantaneous, online world. Together we can strive to make every connection a safe one.